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A
PLEA
FOR
SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION
ON
CATHOLICK PRINCIPLES.

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BY J. M. MASON, D.D.

***

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BE IT REMEMBERED, that on the twentieth day of **April**, in the fortieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, J. M. Mason, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the Title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Authour and Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

L. S.

"A Plea for Sacramental Communion on Catholick Principles. By J. M. Mason, D. D."

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authours and Proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned." And also to an act, entitled "An Act, supplementary to an act, entitled an act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authours and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of Designing, Engraving, and Etching Historical and other Prints.

THERON RUDD,
Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.

PREFACE.

So long a time has elapsed since the ensuing volume was promised, that the authour owes an explanation of the causes which have retarded its appearance.

The greater part of what was at first intended for the press had been prepared nearly two years before the proposals for printing it were issued. In the mean time the subject had undergone extensive discussion, and had excited inquiry in several parts of the United States. The manuscript was found, upon revision, to cover too narrow ground for the range which the question had taken; and the whole was to be written over. This labour, falling in with numerous and urgent avocations pressing upon an impaired state of health, proceeded, and could proceed, but slowly. It was performed at short and broken intervals: The work swelled, by degrees, beyond its anticipated limits, was interrupted more than once by the authour's absence from home; and suspended for some time by other embarrassments. These things, it is hoped, will furnish a reasonable apology for the delay.

The reader will probably observe that the same thoughts recur in different parts of the work. This was in some measure unavoidable, from the affinity between topics which however required a separate consideration. Nor was there much solicitude to avoid it, as it is of benefit to many in whose minds the general course of reasoning might be confused or enfeebled without the aid of occasional repetitions.

The printed proposals describe Part II. as consisting of "proof from *authentick facts*, that "sacramental communion, on Catholick principles, is agreeable to the faith and practice of "the church of Christ, *from the day of Pentecost* "*to the present time*, with a few local and party "exceptions." That his terms may not be stretched beyond his meaning, the authour thinks it proper to disclaim any construction which may be put upon them inconsistent with his own elucidation in the work itself.

The reader will not attribute to an affectation of learning, the Latin and Greek quotations which occupy so much of the margin in the second part. Had the authour consulted merely his own wishes, he should have been satisfied with a simple reference to the primitive and reformed writers. But as they are extremely scarce in all parts of our country, and absolutely inaccessible in most, it was thought necessary to subjoin the original, in order that readers who have the ability, might also have the means, of judging whether his representations are correct or not.

He would also guard against a misconception of his language respecting the feelings and habits of religious sects in the United States. It might be supposed that they are *all* in such a state of mutual hostility as, without exception, to decline each other's communion. Such, however, is not the fact. Within a few years there has been a manifest relaxation of sectarian rigour in several denominations. And the spirit of the Gospel, in the culture of fraternal charity, has gained, upon a respectable scale, a visible and growing ascendancy. This happy alteration may be attributed, in a great degree, to the influence of Missionary and Bible Societies.

Still there is room for complaint, humiliation, and rebuke; and remarks of such a character must be viewed as referring to those among whom the *Sectarian* continues to lord it over the *Christian.* May that preposterous inversion come speedily to an end! May the Catholicism of "grace and truth" wax stronger and stronger, till "Ephraim shall not envy Judah," nor "Judah vex Ephraim"—the lust of sect being overcome and banished by the all-subduing love of God our Saviour! Amen!

New-York, April 16, 1816.

INTRODUCTION.

In August, 1810, a combination of circumstances wholly providential, being unsought and unexpected by all concerned, led the third Associate Reformed Church in the city of New-York, then recently formed under the ministry of Dr. John M. Mason, to hold their assemblies in the house belonging to the church under the pastoral care of Dr. John B. Romeyn, a minister of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in North America. As the hours of service were different, the one congregation succeeding the other in the same place on the same day, the first effect of this arrangement was a partial amalgamation of the two societies in the ordinary exercises of public worship—the next, a mutual esteem growing out of mutual acquaintance with each other, as united in the same precious faith; and, finally, after a very short time, invitations on both sides to join in commemorating, at his own table, the love of that Saviour who gave himself for them, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling savour. The invitations were as cordially accepted as they were frankly given. The bulk of the members of both churches, as well as some belonging to correlate churches, mingled their affections and their testimony in the holy ordinance. The ministers reciprocated the services of the sacramental day; and the communion, thus established, has been perpetuated with increasing delight and attachment, and has extended itself to ministers and private christians of other churches.

Such an event, it is believed, had never before occurred in the United States. The Presbyterian Church in North America sprang immediately from the established church of Scotland. The Associate Reformed Church, Presbyterian also, was founded in the union of ministers and people from the two branches of the Secession in Scotland, and from the Reformed Presbytery.

When they emigrated to this country, it was not to be expected that the *esprit du corps*, their characteristic feelings, should perish in the Atlantic. All experience justifies the poet's remark,

Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt;

and accordingly, like the mother-churches, they maintained not only separate communions, but much of the old reserve and distance.

Portions of two denominations thus situated, laying aside their party distinctions, coming together on the broad ground of one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one "God and Father of all," and embracing each other in the most sacred and tender offices of Christian fellowship, presented a scene of no common or feeble interest. Its very novelty roused attention; and gave birth to speculations various as the temper, character, and condition of their authors. Rumour, with her "hundred tongues," was active, as usual, in bespeaking the public ear. Intelligence, announcing the truth, and more than the truth, but yet not the whole truth; and accompanied, occasionally, by surmises and comments ill calculated to make a favourable impression, was forwarded, with industrious celerity, to distant parts of the land.

The Associate Reformed Church, generally speaking, had been strict, and even exclusive, in her communion. The jealousy *naturally* entertained by her toward the General Assembly, was, to say the least, not diminished by the collisions which had taken place between many of their members, especially in the western and southern parts of the United States. All things, therefore, considered, we are not to wonder that the report of what happened at New-York was received, by very many, with dislike and alarm. This effect is so perfectly analogous to the laws which govern feeling in masses of men, that it could not have been hindered but by a miracle, or something very like a miracle. They are startled by nothing so soon as by encroachment upon their habits: and will rather permit their understanding to be unfruitful, than the routine of their thoughts and conduct to be broken up. Let us not complain of this propensity; although it may be, and often is, indulged too far. It is a wise provision in the economy of human nature, without which there would be neither stability, order, nor comfort. Remove it, and the past would furnish no lessons for the future: Intellect would be wasted on premises without conclusions, and life on experiments without results. Therefore no principle is more firmly established in the minds of all who think correctly and act discreetly, than this—that *wanton invasion of social habits is of the essence of folly.* Yet there is an extreme of caution as reprehensible and hurtful as the extreme of rashness. Till human opinions become infallible, the practices which grow out of them cannot be *always* right. In many cases, as every party acknowledges of every other, they are decidedly wrong. It is thus settled by common consent, and for the best of reasons, that whatever be the courtesy due to public habit, we are not to bow before it with superstitious reverence. We should treat it as we are to treat our civil rulers, with unfeigned respect, but with a reserve for the obligation to obey God rather than man. At no time, and upon no pretence, must it be allowed to usurp the right of controling conscience in matters of *scriptural principle;* nor to exert the pestilent prerogative of abetting the cause of errour by arresting the progress of inquiry after truth. Unless we accede to this proposition, the rock is swept away from under our feet. The doctrine of Reformation is the worst of heresies; and every attempt to enforce it a profligate insurrection against human peace. "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" When there exist serious doubts, and those not hastily admitted, whether certain practical opinions, i. e. opinions which influence habit, among Christians, are really serviceable or injurious to the interests of pure Christianity, an opportunity of bringing their propriety to the test, instead of being lamented as an affliction, should be welcomed as a benefit. Such doubts have been long entertained, and, as it is conceived, upon no slight grounds, not concerning the *avowed doctrine* of the Associate Reformed Church, respecting Christian communion, but concerning her *almost invariable practice* on that point. It has been, it is at this moment, more than doubted, whether the rigour of her restrictive communion corresponds with the genius of the gospel; with the best spirit of the best churches in the best of times; or with her own professed principles. The writer of these pages confesses that such has been long the state of his own mind. Considerations of public delicacy, induced him, for a number of years, not merely to abstain from the use of his liberty, but to forego what he accounted a high evangelical privilege; and to submit to these sacrifices under the painful apprehension, at least on some occasions, that he might be found to have lent himself to mere party passions, when he ought to have immolated them on the altar of love to Jesus Christ, in expressions of love which he was compelled to deny even to those who bore the image of Christ.*

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* One of these occasions it is impossible for him to forget. He had been distributing tokens of admission to the Lord's supper. After the congregation had retired, he perceived a young woman at the lower end of an aisle reclining on a pew in a pensive attitude. As he approached her, she said, " Sir, I am afraid I have done wrong?" Why, what have you done? " I went up with the communicants, and

He has not been alone in this embarrassment. And he is far from regretting an event which led him and others of his brethren to an exchange of communion most consonant, as they believe, to the divine word, and to the very letter and spirit of that form of sound doctrine which, in the most solemn moment of their lives, under the oath of God in their ordination-vows, they bound themselves to maintain and to apply. He cannot regret such an event, because it invites a free

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received a token, but am not a member of your church; and I could not be at rest till I spoke to you about it." To what church do you belong? "To the Dutch church: and, if you wish it, I can satisfy you of my character and standing there." But what made you come for a token without mentioning the matter before? "I had not an opportunity, as I did not know in time that your communion was to be next Lord's day. I am sorry if I have done wrong: but I expect to leave the city on Tuesday; and to be absent, I cannot tell how long, in a part of the country where I shall have no opportunity of communing; and I wished, once more before I went away, to join with Christians in showing forth my Saviour's death." He consulted a moment with the church-officers who were still present; and it was thought most expedient not to grant her request. He communicated this answer as gently as possible to the modest petitioner. She said not another word; but with one hand giving back the token, and with the other putting up her kerchief to her eyes, she turned away, struggling with her anguish, and the tears streaming down her cheeks. How did his heart smite him! He went home exclaiming to himself, "Can this be right? Is it possible that such is the law of the Redeemer's house?" It quickened his inquiries; his inquiries strengthened his doubts; and have terminated in the conviction that it was altogether wrong.

discussion, and may conduct to a comfortable decision, of the great question concerning "the communion of saints." With this view he solicits calm and candid attention, while he endeavours to trace, without disguise, the general course of those reflections and reasonings of which the result has created so much public agitation.

PART I.

The Scriptural Doctrine.

STRANGE as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that men who have the bible in their hands as their *only* rule of faith and practice, appeal immediately to its testimony, for their *justification*, but very rarely for their *information*. They take for granted that their peculiarities are right, and that the only use of the scripture is to *prove* them. Much is gained when, instead of putting their language into the mouth of the book of God, the book of God is allowed to sit in judgment upon themselves, and to pronounce its own verdict. This is that course of truth which, however feebly, we shall endeavour to follow. So that our leading inquiry contemplates the direct doctrine of the scripture concerning Christian fellowship.

We must go to first principles:

There is no point more fully settled in the scriptures, than this, that

The Church of God is ONE.

It were endless to collect all the proofs. Let one suffice. Paul, or rather the Holy Ghost, who spake by his mouth and wrote with his pen, has thus represented it. *As the body is* ONE, *and hath many members; and all the members of that one body, being* MANY, *are* ONE BODY; *so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we* ALL *baptized into* ONE *body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been* ALL *made to drink into* ONE *Spirit. For the* BODY *is not* ONE *member, but* MANY.* This analogy between man's natural body and the spiritual body of Christ, which he elsewhere declares to be the church,† Paul presses at great length, and with unusual minuteness. He does it, as any one who shall seriously peruse the context may see, with the design of reproving, and, if possible, destroying that vain glorious temper which had infected the Corinthian converts; each one arrogating to himself, or to that class with which his gifts more immediately connected him, a peculiar pre-eminence and sanctity; as if he and his associates were the special favourites of God, and enjoyed so exclusively the nobler ministrations of the Spirit, as to justify their contempt of others whom they thought to be less distinguished. In order to demonstrate the unreasonableness and unrighteousness of such conduct, he lays down certain indisputable principles concerning the natural body; ex. gr.

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* 1 Cor. xii. 12—14.

† Eph. i. 22, 23. iii. 16. iv. 3—13.

1. That the multitude of its members does not destroy its unity, nor their relation to it as a whole —*all the members of that one body, being* MANY, *are* ONE *body: v.* 12.

2. That their union with the body is the foundation of all the value, beauty, and excellence, of the members in their respective places. *v.* 15—24.

3. That the efficiency of the members consists in their mutual co-operation as parts of a common whole—*that there should be no* SCHISM *in the body. v.* 25.

4. That from their union with the body, there results, by a divine constitution, a communion of interests; a sympathy of feeling, and a reciprocation of benefits—*that the members should have the same care one for another: And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. v.* 25, 26.

The use of this similitude Paul declares to be an illustration of the unity of the church, and of the intimate communion of believers. *Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. v.* 27.

It is true that the Apostle turns his argument directly against the contentions in the Corinthian church about the superiority, or inferiority, of public offices and spiritual gifts. *And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles, secondarily, prophets, &c.* v 28—30. But it is also true that the *principles* of his argument are general; are equally applicable to every thing which tends to cherish among Christians a *party feeling*, at the expense of weakening the sense of their union, or of interrupting their communion, as members of the body of Christ; and were intended to be so applied: For,

They are part of the Apostle's remonstrance against the schismatic spirit which had split up the church of Corinth into a number of factions: one crying, "I am of Paul;" another, "I am of Apollos;" another, "I am of Cephas;" and another, more proud and boasting more purity than any of the rest, "I am of Christ." Scandalous, however, as their schisms were, they had not proceeded to separation, nor did they dream of breaking communion. If the Apostle so sternly reprehended their divisions as inconsistent with the unity of the church, although they continued to hold communion together, what would he have said, how would he have thundered forth his indignant rebuke had they carried their contests so far as to burst the bonds of communion, and, by that fact, virtually to disown each other as members of the body of Christ?

Moreover, the Apostle has himself extended his argument to matters which, without affecting the substance of our faith, hope, or duty, do yet produce great diversity of opinion and habit: and has shown that they ought not to infringe upon Christian union; nor, consequently, upon the expression of it in Christian communion. Between the freeman and the slave, between the barbarian and the Greek, between the Gentile and the Jew, there existed wide differences of condition and feeling, and large sources of animosity. But, saith Paul, they must all yield to the force, they must all bow before the majesty, of this consideration;—that the Christian freeman and slave—the Christian barbarian and Greek—the Christian Gentile and Jew, have "*by one Spirit been all baptized into one body.*" What is this but to say, that the union of believers with each other as members of the body of Christ, is more precious than any other union, civil, national, or ecclesiastical? and will always outweigh, in the balance of God's judgment, the heaviest pleas which can be accumulated for recognising any other in preference to it; or for not recognising it in preference to every other?

Finally. The Apostle opposes the spirit of ecclesiastical faction to the spirit of Christian love.* This heavenly grace he exalts above prophecies, tongues, knowledge, the faith of miracles, the most magnificent alms, the very zeal of martyrdom! Now this love, the only cure for the gangrene of party strife—the most characteristic feature of Christ's image in a renewed man—the most precious fruit of his grace; and yet the fruit which the bulk of his professed followers seem to think themselves under hardly any obligations to cultivate—this love is declared to originate in the love of God shed abroad in the heart; and to be drawn out toward the brethren precisely on this account, that they are the *children of God*—the disciples of Christ—and therefore not on account of their adherence to one or another denomination, however sound it may be in the faith. *Hereby*, said the master, *hereby shall all men know that ye are* MY *disciples, if ye have love one to another.*† *Every one*, adds the beloved John who lay in his bosom and drank deeply into his spirit, *every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.*‡ And surely the description which Paul has given of Christian love, in the chapter before us, corresponds to any thing else as well as to that gloomy distance and sour disdain, which are cherished by some professors towards others of whose graces the light is at least equal to their own; and which, by a hardihood not easily attained or equalled, are converted into a testimony for Jesus Christ!

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* 1 Cor. xiii. † John xiii. 35. ‡ 1 John v. 1.

Since, therefore, the Apostle has resembled the unity of the Christian church and the union of Christians, to the unity of the human body and the union of its members; and since the use of this similitude in his expostulation with the Corinthian schismatics was only a special application of a doctrine general in itself, and applicable every where and always to feuds and divisions among those who embrace substantially the same faith, let us, in few words, gather up its results, and see how they bear upon the subject of sacramental communion.

1. The body of Christ is one.

2. Every member of this body has, by a divine constitution, utterly independent on his own will, both union and communion with every other member, as infallibly as hands and feet, eyes, ears, and nose, are, by the very constitution of the physical body, united together as parts of a whole, and sympathise with each other accordingly.

3. The members of this body of Christ have a common and unalienable interest in all the provision which God has made for its nutriment, growth, and consolation; and that simply and absolutely, because they are members of that body. Therefore,

4. The members of the church of Christ, individually and collectively, are under a moral necessity, i. e. under the obligation of God's authority, to recognise each other's character and privileges; and, consequently, not to deny the tokens of such recognition. Sacramental communion is one of those tokens: therefore, the members of the church of Christ, *as such*, are under the obligation of God's authority to recognise their relation to Christ and to each other, by joining together in sacramental communion. Nor has any church upon earth the power to refuse a seat at the table of the Lord to one whose "conversation is as becometh the gospel." If she has, she has derived it from some other quarter than her master's grant: and founds the privilege of communion with *her* in something else than a person's "having received Christ Jesus the Lord, and walking in him.". Let her look to herself, and see what account she shall be able to render of her usurpation.

This general conclusion, flowing irrefragably from the scriptural doctrine of the unity of Christ's body and the union and communion of its members, is illustrated and confirmed by a consideration of the *tenure* by which all Christian churches and people hold their Christian privileges.

None whom these pages address will pretend that there are no true Christians in the world but themselves, and no true churches but their own—that all other professors are mere heathen; and all their churches,. synagogues of Satan. The very idea of such arrogance is abhorred by those whose feelings and practice are most adverse to free communion. They profess to acknowledge and honour other churches—to rejoice in the gifts and graces of other Christians—to account them "as dear children" of God; as "brethren beloved" in their common Redeemer: nor is there any reason to doubt the sincerity of such professions. This is all right—Christian-like—just as it should be. But does it never appear to these good men somewhat incongruous to decline taking a family-meal with any of the household of faith who do not happen to occupy the same apartment with themselves? to own them as "saints," and "precious" saints; and yet deny them the provision which belongs to the saints? And at the moment of greeting them as brethren, *beloved* brethren, to tell them, "you shall not have, at the table where *we* sup, one crumb of the bread, nor one drop of the wine which Jesus, both your Lord and ours, has given to you as well as to us?" This is certainly an original way of expressing *love!*

But, to press the matter a little closer. These true churches and Christians have a right to the holy sacraments, or they have not. If not, it is a contradiction to call them true churches: the rightful possession of the sacraments being essential to the existence of a true church. They have then such a right. How did they obtain it? By a grant from the Lord Jesus Christ, unquestionably. He gave all church-privileges to his church catholic; and from this catholic grant do all particular churches derive their right to, and their property in whatever privileges they enjoy.* Other true churches, then, hold their right to all church privileges by the very same tenure by which we hold ours; and, consequently, the members of those churches have the very same right to the table of the Lord as the members of our own. By what authority, therefore, does any particular church undertake to invalidate a right bestowed by Christ himself? And what less, or what else, does she attempt, when she refuses to admit Christians from other particular churches to the participation of any ordinance which Christ has established for their common use? The sacramental table is spread. I approach and ask for a seat. You say, "No." "Do you dispute my Christian character and standing." "Not in the least." "Why, then, am I refused?" "You do not belong to *our* church." "*Your* church! what do you mean by *your* church? Is it any thing more than a branch of *Christ's* church? Whose table is this? Is it the *Lord's* table, or *yours?* If yours and not his, I have done. But if it is the *Lord's*, where did you acquire the power of shutting out from its mercies any one of his people? I claim my seat under my master's grant. Show me your warrant for interfering with it."

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* See the WESTMINSTER *Confession of Faith*, ch. xv. and *Form of Church government*, at the beginning; with the scriptural proofs.

Methinks it should require a stout heart to encounter such a challenge: and that the sturdiest sectarian upon earth, not destitute of the fear of God, should pause and tremble before he ventured upon a final repulse. The language of such an act is very clear and daring. "You have, indeed, Christ's invitation to his table; but you have not *mine*. And without *mine*, *his* shall not avail." Most fearful! Christ Jesus says, *do this in remembrance of me.* His servants rise to obey his command; and a fellow servant, acting in the name of that Christ Jesus, under the oath of God, interposes *his* veto, and says—"You shall not." Whose soul does not shrink and shudder!

Place the subject in another light. Is it, or is it not the *duty* of Christians in all true churches to show forth the Lord's death in the sacrament of the supper? If not, then we have true churches and Christians under no obligation to observe the most characteristic and discriminating of the Christian ordinances. Here, again, is a contradiction nearly in terms. For who can acknowledge a true church without sacraments? If it is—if it would be a great corruption, a grievous sin in those churches to expel or neglect their sacraments, and consign the memorial of their Saviour's love to utter oblivion, it may be further asked—whether, in acquitting themselves of their duty, they perform an acceptable service unto God or not? If they may, and do; and that with the most evident tokens of their master's approbation, as no sober Christian will deny, how should an act of communion in "the body and blood of the Lord," be lawful and commanded to a person in one true church, and be unlawful and forbidden to that same person in another? How should two persons both *honour* the Redeemer by communicating in their respective churches, and both *dishonour* him by the very same thing, if they should happen to exchange places? On what principle of truth or consistency can any man ascribe to a subdivision of God's church, the privilege of controlling the general laws by which the whole is to be governed, and the more than magic virtue of transmuting the character of individuals and of their worship, by the mere fact of their belonging or not belonging to such subdivision? So that the question of their honouring the table of the Lord, or their profaning and polluting it, shall turn precisely on this point, Whether they are members of that particular church or not? Hence emerges a dilemma from which the brethren we have to contend with will find it difficult to make their escape. You must either avow or disavow the doctrine which has just been imputed to your practice. Take your choice. If you avow it, you stand self-convicted of corrupting to their core the institutions of your master. If you disavow it, why do you demand more than the evidence of Christian character as a qualification to communion with *you?* On this side of the dilemma you stand self-convicted of repelling, without reason, your Christian brethren from the table of the Lord. Either way, your condemnation proceeds out of your own mouth.

If any thing be wanting to this general argument, let us inquire at the Chistian sacraments. They are admitted, by all Protestants, to be but two, Baptism and the Lord's supper. What is their nature? What their use? And to whom are they to be administered? We may take our answer from an authority unquestioned by the parties to this discussion.

"Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits; and to confirm our interest in him: as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of Christ, according to his word."*

Assuming this account of the sacraments to be scriptural, they are clearly the common property of all Christians under the whole heaven.

1. "They are signs and seals of the covenant of grace." Now, all believers, in all places of Christ's kingdom upon earth, have their share in the mercies of that covenant: therefore, all believers, having the *thing signified*, have a perfect right to the *sign*.

2. They "represent Christ and his benefits, and confirm an interest in him." Therefore, all be-

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* Confession of Faith, ch. xxviii.

lievers, being partakers of Christ and his benefits; in other words, having an interest in him, are the proper recipients of those ordinances whose use is to "confirm" that interest to their faith.

3. "They put a visible difference between those that belong to the church and the rest of the world." Therefore, they who belong unto the church of God, who are known and recognised as Christians, have a right to this badge of discrimination, and are bound to put it on and wear it, as they shall have opportunity, in whatever part of God's church they may happen to be. Consequently, they who so narrow the use of this badge, as to make it distinguish not merely the church from the world; the follower from the foe of Christ Jesus; but the church from the church, the follower from the follower, the friend from the friend of Christ Jesus; and thus to exhibit them as having separate *Christian* interests, corrupt—not the form and circumstances—but the matter, but the substance, of the holy sacraments.

4. They "solemnly engage believers to the service of Christ according to his word." Therefore all who have entered into his service, and mean to regulate their lives by his word—and what Christian does not?—have a right to the sacramental encouragement, commensurate with the sacramental oath. Which of them can inno-

cently refuse the oath? To which of them may the encouragement be innocently denied? And who art thou, sinful flesh, escaped by thy master's grace from the damnation of hell, that darest—yes—DAREST, to keep back from the vow and the consolations of thy master's table *any* whom thou acknowledgest to be the objects of his love?

It results,

1. That they who have a right to sacramental communion any where, have a right to it every where; and, conversely, that they who have not a right to it every where, have a right to it no where.

2. That no qualification for such communion may, by the law of Christ, be exacted from any individual other than VISIBLE CHRISTIANITY; i. e. a profession and practice becoming the gospel, without regard to those sectarian differences which consist with the substance of evangelical truth.

PART II.

Facts.

In questions concerning social observances, the first and most prevalent presumption is in favour of those under which the existing generation was born and educated. What they have always seen before their own eyes, followed in their own practice, and received by tradition from their fathers, the bulk of men consider as having on its side the double advantage of prescription and right. Without exercising much thought on the matter, they have a sort of quiet hereditary notion that it always was as it is, and is as it ought to be. Whatever, therefore, has, in their eye, the appearance of novelty, is an object of suspicion. New and false—new and hurtful, are with them terms of equal import. The conclusion would be sound were the premises correct. In doctrines of faith and ordinances of worship there can be no room for original discoveries. The divine rule for both remains as it was when the sacred canon was closed. If we date from *that* period, then, indeed, every thing new, i. e. every thing unknown to the inspired records, if proposed as an article of faith, or an institution of worship, is necessarily false and hurtful. Here, novelty and crime are the same. Wherefore the essential merits of controversies upon all such points are to be examined and decided by the scripture alone. And every decision agreeable to the scripture takes precedence of all others, how long soever they may have been possessed of the public mind, on the ground both of right and of prescription. Of right, because it is the voice of the law which has the sole prerogative of binding conscience—Of prescription, because God's institutions in his own church must ever be *first*, and all deviations from them, novelties: absolute novelties in their commencement; and comparative novelties at the latest moment of their existence afterwards. On the strength of this principle did the PROTESTANT REFORMERS expel the corruptions of Popery, although they were of old standing; entwined for ages with the habits of society; cherished with *unfeigned* ecclesiastical fondness, and hallowed by popular devotion. To this principle we must ourselves submit—we must even court its application to our own observances, if we hope to pass for the sons of those who, at every personal hazard, and under every dismaying prospect—through fire and through flood: the fire of their own "wood, hay, stubble," kindled by their own hands; and the flood of vengeance poured around them out of the mouth of the Dragon, bore off in safety the gold, the silver, the precious stones, of evangelical treasure; and re-established on earth, by the succours of heaven, the almost ruined cause of truth and grace. Let us, therefore, treading in the steps of those Christian heroes, carry our inquiries back in order to ascertain whether the *catholic* communion for which these pages plead; or the *sectional* communion, so to speak, which characterizes many Christian denominations, receives the most countenance from the faith and practice of the church of God through ages past.

The facts to be embraced by this inquiry may be distributed into three classes: and are furnished by the history of the church strictly called *Apostolical*, i. e. as it existed in the days of the Apostles themselves—by the history of the *primitive* church which immediately succeeded—and by the history of the church as renovated in the *Reformation from Popery.*

1. Facts from the Apostolic history. For these we must go to the New Testament itself.

One of these facts occurs in the case of the first converts, who became such under the first sermon after the full introduction of the New Testament economy. When the Jews, " pricked in their heart" by the plain and pungent preaching of Peter, cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" the Apostle replied, "*Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.*"* Let us view the bearings of this transaction.

1st. Peter had quoted a passage from the prophet Joel, promising *salvation* to faith in, and profession of, the Lord Jesus, *v.* 21. for thus he proves and applies the sense of the oracle in his subsequent reasoning.

2d. Peter represents this faith as having for its object *Christ crucified;* i. e. Christ "who bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" the substitute, the propitiary sacrifice in the room of believers on him.†

3d. Having held up to their view Jesus the crucified, the Christ, he enjoins on them a change of all their erroneous notions concerning his person, his kingdom, and his work; and to receive the truth in its simplicity—"*Repent.*"

4th. On the supposition of such repentance he commands them to "be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." They drank in this precious doctrine as the thirsty land drinks in the rain from heaven. They "gladly received his word;" and upon receiving it "were *baptized.*"

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* Acts, ii. 14—38.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24. iii. 18.

It appears, therefore, that in the very first precedent for admission to sealing ordinances, and *that* set under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the *only* qualification was *faith in the Lord Jesus as the Saviour of sinners by the blood of his cross*—a faith manifested by a credible profession of his name.

Another fact occurs in the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch. The story is told in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Philip the evangelist, having, by divine admonition, accosted this distinguished officer as he was returning home from Jerusalem, and been courteously invited into his chariot, instructed him, from a passage of Isaiah which he was then reading, in the doctrine of Jesus the Messiah, and of the nature and use of the Christian sacraments. The first is plainly asserted in *v.* 35. and the second as plainly implied in *v.* 36. For how could he ask such a question as, "See! here is water—what doth hinder me to be baptized?" if he had been taught nothing of that sacrament? Philip replied, that if he was a sincere believer in that Jesus, he might. Without delay he makes the requisite profession of his faith, and is baptized accordingly.

Here, in perfect conformity with the original precedent already produced, is a minister of the gospel acting under the immediate injunction of the Holy Spirit, administering one of the sealing ordinances to a new disciple upon no other terms than a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A *third* fact occurs in the history of Saul; Acts, ix. That furious persecutor, having been miraculously arrested on his journey to Damascus in quest of the blood of the saints; and undergone, during the three days of his blindness and fasting, such discipline and instruction from the Lord Jesus himself, as both changed his heart and qualified him for the Apostleship, was admitted forthwith to the sacrament of baptism. Upon what ground? Simply on the ground of his *belonging to Christ.* For on this ground Christ himself placed it. *He is a chosen vessel unto me,* saith the Redeemer. That the knowledge of this fact was communicated by *revelation* to Ananias, is of no weight in the present argument. For the question is not, "*How* are we to ascertain a man's Christianity?" But whether, on the supposition of its being ascertained, (which is always supposed when we *admit* its existence,) it is, *in and of itself,* a sufficient title to gospel ordinances in whatever part of the church catholic they may happen to be dispensed? If it is not—if any thing more than the evidence of Christian character be requisite to create both the right and the obligation to reciprocal communion, it is clear that an immediate revelation from God certifying such a character, would not form a valid claim to communion. The Apostle elect of the Gentiles should have gone unbaptized!

A *fourth* fact occurs in the case of Cornelius, the first Gentile admitted into the Christian church. All the circumstances of his reception are too minutely related in the tenth chapter of the Acts, and are too familiar to every serious reader, to allow of repetition in this place. Our concern is with the concluding scene.

While Peter was opening up the plan of salvation, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then answered Peter, *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which* HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST AS WELL AS WE? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." *v.* 44—48.

This descent of the Holy Ghost was visible proof of God's acceptance; and the *sole* principle on which the Apostle pronounced them to be fit subjects for sacramental recognition; and actually did admit them to all the privileges of the Christian church The news of such an event was not slow in travelling. "The Apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God."* The account of Peter's share in this revolution was too essential to be overlooked. His Jewish brethren were stumbled, and alarmed. No sooner does he appear at Jerusalem, than a complaint is tabled against him. "They that were of the circumcision contended with him." *v.* 2. Well, what is the offence? He had held corrupt communion! How? "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." *v.* 3. The fact was indisputable; but the inference, viz. that he had acted irregularly, if not irreligiously, was unfounded. His brethren reasoned from their prejudices, and came to their conclusion before they had examined the merits of the cause. Nor is it unworthy of remark, that, in their complaint, they laid a great stress upon a circumstance which habit had erected into ecclesiastical law, but which it were vain to seek in any commandment of God—the unlawfulness of religious or even social intercourse *with a Gentile!* And so heinous in their eyes was this transgression of the "tradition of the elders," that it served as a point of concentration for their whole grievance. *Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised and didst eat with them!* N. B. It is no new thing for good and upright men, through the force of prepossession, the want of information, and precipitancy of judgment arising from both, to blame that which God approves; to set themselves against that which God has authorized; and to be strenuous for that which God disregards. This was the errour of Peter's brethren. However, with the consciousness not only of pure intention, but of laudable conduct, he calmly listens to their accusation, and vindicates his proceedings in a manner equally admirable for its meekness and its dignity. "He rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them;" giving a succinct history of the steps by which he was led, under a divine communication, to the house of Cornelius; of his preaching the gospel there; and of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon his Gentile hearers. *v.* 4—15. His reasoning upon the facts is thus nervously summed up. "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, *John indeed*

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* Acts, ch. xii.

baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" *v.* 16, 17.

The prominent points in this reasoning are,

1st. God has given to these Gentiles that holy Spirit of whom the water in John's baptism was an emblem and pledge.

2d. God has thus borne witness to them as his children, and heirs of his promise.

3d. God has put them upon a perfect level with ourselves, by this testimony to their faith in Christ Jesus: so that whatever privileges we have, they have also; and are intitled to receive *with* us and *from* us.

4th. Under this evidence of their gracious relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, to refuse them the seal of that relation were to RESIST GOD! And, therefore, he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord: which is precisely equivalent to his administering the ordinance with his own hands.

The opposition ceased—the brethren were satisfied. They had been warm in their displeasure; but they yielded to the light of truth—they yielded magnanimously—when it was once proved that these Gentiles were owned of God;

were placed among *his* people, and blessed with his Spirit; the doubt was removed; the debate was over: and instead of cavilling, or hunting up small distinctions by the aid of which they might seem to acknowledge the Christian character of the new converts, and yet censure the Apostle Peter for holding communion with them, they joined together in humble thankfulness to God for this additional display of his grace. "They held their peace"—they had no more fault to find, nor objections to make; "and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." *v.* 18. Why should it not be so still? Why should not such proof of Christian character in others, no matter whom, as we deem sufficient among ourselves, be at this hour, as it was then, the rule of Christian fellowship on the broadest scale? And a refusal of that communion to any whom we own that God has owned by the same tokens which he has given to us, be now, as it would have been then, a WITHSTANDING OF GOD?

A *fifth* fact occurs in the history of the reference from Antioch, and of the proceedings thereon by the Synod of Jerusalem. Acts, xv.

"Certain men," ministers of the word, "which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of*

Moses, ye cannot be saved." *v.* 1. This doctrine, false and dangerous, tending to subvert the entire fabric of evangelical truth, Paul and Barnabas promptly and firmly resisted. *v.* 2. But the erroneous teachers persevering, and being probably supported by Jewish converts, with very little prospect of gaining over the Gentiles; it was judged expedient for the prevention of feuds, to refer the question to the Apostles and Presbyters at Jerusalem. *v.* 2. They accepted the reference—took the subject into consideration—condemned the doctrine which had raised the ferment in Antioch—prohibited the preaching of it in future—and, with regard to the remaining differences, advised both parties to forbearance and love. *v.* 22—29.

The value of their decision, as a precedent for posterity, lies in its *principle.* On the one hand, that venerable council would not endure, "no, not for an hour," the least infringement upon that prime essential of Christianity, the *justification of a sinner by faith* ALONE: nor, on the other, would they countenance the spirit of schism and separation, even for the sake of *important differences* which left both sides in possession of the *substantial* truth. On these matters they enjoined respect to each others feelings—they enjoined bearing and forbearing—they enjoined "endeavours to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"—they did not enjoin, nor abet, nor in any wise encourage, the disruption of communion. Prejudice herself must confess that the variance between the Gentile and Jewish believer on the subject of circumcision and of the Mosaic law generally, even without the notion of its necessity to salvation, was much wider than the variance between many Christians who will not commune together in the body and blood of their common Lord. The sense of their union with him, according to the Apostolic rule, should absorb their inferior discrepancies of opinion and practice among themselves. But, directly reversing this order, their inferior discrepancies overpower the sense of their union as one in him. O how unlike the spirit and the example of those glorious days of the Son of man!

The scriptural details might be prosecuted further; but it is superfluous. They are all of one complexion. Nor is there any hazard in asserting, without qualification, that there is not in all the New Testament, one solitary doctrine or fact which so much as implies, or can be made by any tolerable interpretation to *appear* to imply, that the Lord Jesus has authorized the exaction of any term whatever for the *whole fellowship* of his church, other than visible Christianity. Objections will be noticed in their proper place.

II. The second class of facts is furnished by the history of the *primitive church* from the days of the Apostles to the close of the fourth century.

It was not more her character, during that period, to profess Christianity, than it was to assert her catholic *unity*; and to cherish, on all occasions, the most tender solicitude for its preservation. This is so evident, that an attempt to set forth its proofs at large would be altogether impertinent. No man who has only glanced at the writings of the early fathers, will raise a doubt on the subject. It is material, however, to inquire in what she viewed her unity as consisting—by what it was liable to be broken—and how it was to be maintained.

Her unity consisted in her common faith, her common institutions—and brotherly love.

1. The chief attribute of her unity was her common faith; i. e. the faith which was common to her members all over the world.

In the exposition of her faith, as a rallying point of union, she confined herself to a few great principles—principles which are, every where and at all times, vital to the religion of Jesus—and without which it is impossible there should be either Christianity or Christians. Nothing can be more simple, nor summed up with more studious brevity than the early creeds, or, as they were called, *symbols of the faith.* That little composition, familiarly known by the name of the "*Apostles' creed*," though probably not their work, may give the reader a correct idea of their general structure. For his further satisfaction, however, I shall translate another specimen from *Irenæus*, a disciple of *Polycarp*, and a most strenuous defender of the purity of the faith against various heresies.

"The church, although scattered over the whole world, even to the extremities of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples, the FAITH, viz. on one God the FATHER, almighty, that made the heaven and the earth, and the seas, and all things therein—and on one CHRIST JESUS, the son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation—and on the HOLY SPIRIT, who, by the prophets, preached the dispensations, and the advents, and the generation from a Virgin, and the suffering, and the resurrection from the dead, and the assumption, in flesh, into heaven, of our beloved Lord Jesus Christ; and his coming again from the heavens in the glory of the Father, to sum up all things, and raise all flesh of all mankind; that to Christ Jesus, our Lord, and God, and Saviour, and King, according to the good pleasure of his father who is invisible, every knee may bow of beings in heaven, in earth, and under the earth; and every tongue may confess to him; and that he may exercise righteous judgment upon all; may send spiritual wickednesses, and transgressing and apostate angels, and ungodly, and unjust, and lawless, and blasphemous men, into eternal fire. But on the righteous and holy—on those who have kept his commandments and continued in his love, whether from the beginning or after repentance, may, with the gift of life, bestow incorruption, and put them in possession of eternal glory."*

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* Fidelity rather than elegance has been consulted in this translation. But that the reader may judge for himself, the original is subjoined.

Η μεν γαρ Εκκλησια, καιπερ καθ' ὁλης της οικουμενης ἑως περατων της γης διεσπαρμενη, παρα δε των Αποςολων, και των εκεινων μαθητων παραλαβουσα την εις ἑνα θεον πατερα παντοκρατορα, τον πεποιηκοτα τον ουρανον, και την γην, και τας θαλασσας, και παντα τα εν αυτοις, πιστιν· και εις ἑνα Χριστον Ιησουν, τον ὑιον του Θεου, τον σαρκωθεντα ὑπερ της ἡμετερας σωτηριας· και εις Πνευμα ἁγιον, το δια των προφητων κεκηρυχος τας οικονομιας, και τας ελευσεις, και την εκ Παρθενου γεννησιν, και το παθος, και την εγερσιν εκ νεκρων, και την ενσαρκον εις τους ουρανους αναληψιν του ηγαπημενου Χριστου Ιησου του Κυριου ἡμων, και την εκ των ουρανων εν τῃ δοξῃ του πατρος παρουσιαν αυτου, επι το ανακεφαλαιωσασθαι τα παντα, και αναστησαι πασαν σαρκα πασης ανθρωποτητος, ἱνα Χριστῳ Ιησου τῳ Κυριῳ ἡμων, και Θεῳ, και σωτηρι, και βασιλει, κατα την ευδοκιαν του Πατρος του αορατου, παν γονυ καμψῃ επουρανιων και επιγειων και καταχθονιων, και πασα γλωσσα εξομολογησηται, και κρισιν δικαιαν εν τοις πασι ποιησηται· τα μεν πνευματικα της πονηριας, και αγγελους παραβεβηκοτας, και εν αποςασιᾳ γεγονοτας, και τους ασεβεις, και αδικους, και ανομους, και βλασφημους των ανθρωπων εις το αιωνιον πυρ πεμψῃ· τοις δε δι-

" This faith," proceeds Irenæus, " the church, as I said before, has received, and though dispersed over the whole world, assiduously preserves as if she inhabited a single house; and believes in these things as having but one heart and one soul: and with perfect harmony proclaims, teaches, hands down, these things as though she had but one mouth. For though there are various and dissimilar languages in the world; yet the power of the faith transmitted is one and the same. Neither the churches in *Germany*, nor in *Iberia*," *(Spain)* " nor among the *Celtæ*," (in *France)* " nor in the *East*, nor in *Egypt*, nor in *Libya*, nor in the middle regions of the world," *(Jerusalem* and the adjacent districts) " believe or teach any other doctrines. But as the Sun is one and the same throughout the whole world; so the preaching of the truth shines every where, and enlightens all men who are willing to come to the knowledge of truth. Nor will the most powerful in speech among the governours of the churches say any thing more than these; (for no one can be above his master;) nor the most feeble any thing less.

καιοις, και ὁσιοις, και τας εντολας αυτου τετηρηκοσι, και εν τῃ αγαπῃ αυτου διαμεμενηκοσι τοις (μεν) απ' αρχης, τοις δε εκ μετανοιας, ζωην χαρισαμενος, αφθαρσιαν δωρησηται, και δοξην αιωνιαν περιποιησῃ.

IREN. *Adversus Hæreses*. Lib. I. c. 2. p. 45. ed. *Grabe*.

For as there is but one faith, he who is "able to speak much cannot enlarge; nor he who can say little, diminish it."*

It is clear that this venerable father did not mean to give the very words of any formula of faith; but to state, substantially, those high and leading truths in which all the churches of Christ over the whole world harmonized; and which formed the *doctrinal* bond of their union.

It is also certain, that as heresies, corrupting any *cardinal* principle of Christianity, arose in the church, her public profession met them by an open and decisive assertion of the injured truth. This necessarily enlarged, by degrees, the number of articles in her creed, as well as the scope of her ministerial instruction. But her maintenance of the faith was always pointed and brief. She never launched out into wide discussion; never pursued principles to their remote consequences; nor embarrassed her testimony by numerous and minute applications. These were left then as they ought to be now, and, in the nature of things, must be, in a very great measure, to the intelligence and fidelity of her ministry. But the basis of her communion was laid so broad, in the vital doctrines of the gospel, that all who "held the head," in whatever spot of the globe, might join, as they had opportunity, in the reciprocation of Christian kindnesses, and the enjoyment of Christian privileges. For proof of this a single fact will suffice. The most copious of all her confessions, framed toward the close of the fourth century, or about A. D. 373, nearly two hundred years after Irenæus, was designed, expressly, to guard and vindicate the common faith against the numerous heresies of the age. "All the orthodox bishops," says EPIPHANIUS, "and, in a word, the whole catholic church, in opposition to those heresies, and conformably to the pre-established faith of those holy fathers" (the Apostles and their successors) "affirm and maintain as follows; *We believe*," *&c.* *

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* IREN. ib. c. 3. p. 46. See to the same purpose, CYPRIAN. *de unitate Ecclesiæ*. Opp. p. 108. ed. *Fell.* Oxon. 1682.

He then recites the creed at length. It is substantially the same with the one already quoted; to the specifications of which it gives greater amplitude, and closer application. Yet this *enlarged* creed *would not fill, or more than fill,* THREE PAGES *of the present work!!*

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*Υμεις τε και ἡμεις, και παντες δι ορθοδοξοι επισκοποι, και συλληβδην πασα ἡ ἁγια Καθολικη Εκκλησια προς τας ανακυψασας ἁιρεσεις ακολουθως τῃ των ἁγιων εκεινων πατερων προτεταγμενῃ πιστει, ὁυτως λεγομεν, μάλιστα τοις ἁγιῳ λυτρῳ προσιουσιν, ἱνα απαγγελλωσι και λεγωσι ὁυτως. ΠΙΣΤΕΥΟΜΕΝ κ. τ. λ. EPIPH. *Ancor.* 121. *Opp. T. II.* p. 123, *Petavii.* 1622.

It is now apparent in what the *doctrinal* unity of the primitive church consisted. It was in holding and professing the same faith on points immediately affecting our eternal hope.

2d. The *second* principle of her unity was found in her *common institutions.*

These, again, without descending to subordinate variations or local observances, were her ministry, her worshipping assemblies, and her sacraments.

Whatever alterations passed, in process of time, upon the *form* of her ministry and worship, there was no place nor period, in which their *substance* was not accounted sacred. On the one hand she resisted, with jealous promptitude, every *intrusion* into her official functions; and, on the other, her ministers were ministers of her whole body, and so acknowledged and employed wherever they happened to be, under such restrictions only as prudence rendered it necessary to impose for the preservation of public order. A ministry and a ministry she understood not. It was *one.* To interdict a minister of the gospel, with suitable credentials, from preaching or other service of the sanctuary, in any particular church whatever, on the pretence of its being *unlawful* to receive him and to join with him in ministerial communion, she would have held in abomination. Severance of church from church—worship from worship—sacraments from sacraments, under the notion of *separate* Christian interests, and the denial of reciprocal fellowship, she condemned and detested. CYPRIAN's treatise on the unity of the church;* and his correspondence relative to the Novation schism, will satisfy any candid man of the truth of this representation. Proof in detail is forborne at present, as it will be incorporated with subsequent matter; and will thus prevent a needless if not wearisome repetition.

3d. The *third* great point of primitive unity was, *brotherly love.*

Let brotherly love continue; was an injunction among the last which proceeded from the sanctified lips of Paul the apostle, the aged, the martyr. And for the best of reasons. It is a lesson the most likely to be forgotten, and the most important to be remembered, of all the practical lessons which have been given to the children of men. The most likely to be forgotten: because every form and particle of their depravity has an interest in counteracting it—the most important to be remembered: because it is the principal proof of their reconciliation and communion with God, and the mainspring of their happiness both in this life and that which is to come. Hatred, and her whole brood of envyings, strifes, clamours, jealousies, discords, are from hell—the undisputed progeny of Satan—Charity, with her gentleness, kindness, long-suffering, mercies, meekness, and the whole train of personal lovelinesses and social graces, are from above; the fair and guileless offspring of the "Father of lights." The very end of the Redeemer's mission—the ultimate object of his doctrines, his precepts, his example, his tears, his sacrifice, was to overthrow the reign of malice, and to rear upon its ruins the empire of love. *For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.* But *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.* On the contrary, *he that loveth not, knoweth not God.* Thence the emphasis of those memorable words of the LORD JESUS; *Hereby shall all men* KNOW *that ye are* MY *disciples, if ye have* LOVE *one to another.* In fact, the religion which he has instituted and which his Spirit teaches, is the *only religion* upon the face of the earth which makes LOVE its principle. Even Justification by faith is related to love as a means to an end. It is he who "believeth God," that worketh righteousness, and loves his neighbour.

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* *De unitate Ecclesiæ. Opp. pp.* 104—120. *Ed.* FELL.

In this divine quality of their religion the primitive Christians shone forth with a lustre which eclipses and darkens the church of modern days. That there existed then, as there exist now, whisperings, and backbitings, and evil surmises —that Jealousy raised strife, and ambition parties—that the simple followed where the crafty led—that Zeal often lent herself to vain glory rather than to godly edifying; while Truth frowned and Charity wept, is very certain. Absolute freedom from those ungracious tempers which divide and alienate even the wise and good, is for the heavenly state. It belongs not to flesh and blood: to men of "like passions;" and those passions too often sinful.

Yet with all her imperfections on this point; with all the wranglings and schisms which sprung up in her bosom, the primitive church, *as a whole*, presented a family picture which should make us blush; and *would* make us blush, if we had not, by inveterate habits of collision, and by the artifice of bestowing hallowed names upon unhallowed things, rid ourselves, in a great degree, of Christian shame. That which was the *exception* among the "elders," seems to be the *rule* among the moderns. Their concord was the rule, their disagreements the exception; our concord is the exception, our disagreements the rule. We should feel it to be a cruel satire, were any one to say of us, as the Pagans did of the early believers, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!"

In this fraternal affection did they account much of their unity to consist. Their most distinguished men laboured unweariedly to preserve and promote it: and did not hesitate to pronounce the violation of it to be a practical renunciation of Christianity itself.

As the truth of this representation is generally admitted, since it is every where the theme of Christian panegyric, no authorities are quoted to support it: for it would be idle to prove what nobody denies. Yet if the reader should be at all sceptical, he shall have his doubts removed by what is to follow—the proof of some other matters necessarily involving the proof of this also. Its use in the main question before us will be seen in due time. Proceed we, then, to inquire,

2. By what the primitive church considered her unity as liable to be broken.

It may not be amiss to begin, after the good old way; and shew, *negatively*, what she did *not* reckon as breaches of unity. In this predicament, she comprehended all varieties of opinion and observance which do not subvert the foundation of evangelical truth and order. All which do not impeach a man's claim to the character of a sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus. Whatever they were, within these limits, they did not, in her judgment, dissolve the bonds of her union: by none of them was it impaired.

'Not by a difference in *rites and customs in worship*—

Nor by *imperfections in moral discipline*—

Nor by diversities in the *form of government*—

Nor by dissonant views on *subordinate points of doctrine.*

1st. Not by a difference in *rites and customs in worship.*

That there were discordant practices even in the Apostolic church itself, is clear from the records of the New Testament; and equally clear that they were not allowed to interrupt the harmony of her communion. A great part of Paul's argument, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, ch. xi. concerning the decorum which the sexes ought to study in their modes of dress when engaged in public worship, rests upon the habits of society. Now these, in so far as they interfered neither with the ordinances of worship, nor with pure morals, might very innocently vary in various places. He winds up his remarks, after freely giving his opinion on the question of propriety at that time among the Corinthians, by saying, *If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such* CUSTOM, *neither the churches of God.* "A *contentious* man," it is *Calvin's* comment; "A contentious man is one who wantonly stirs up strife, regardless of the prevalence of truth. Such are all they who, without necessity, carp at good and useful rites," &c. From the words of the Apostle one thing is plain; viz. that matters of secondary moment, relating even to the worship of God, are no justifiable cause of "contention" among Christians.

Does this construction appear too bold and too broad? It shall be confirmed by Paul himself. Wide differences of opinion and practice existed between Christians in his time about the distinction of meats and of days which were established under the Jewish dispensation. The discreet Apostle, aware of men's propensity to bend every thing to their own rule, with very little regard to the feelings of others; and to array their uncharitableness in the livery of zeal for *religion*, interposes to prevent the sacrifice of one party to the rashness or vanity of the other: telling them that they might both serve God acceptably. *He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the* *day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord; for he giveth God thanks: and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not; and giveth God thanks.** Be it so, that Christians or Christian churches have scruples and attachments which neither go the whole length of evangelical freedom, nor even rise up to the height of evangelical purity—be it so, that they who see these infirmities are themselves of clearer light, stronger faith, and larger liberty. Yet they may not, says Paul, pour contempt upon their brethren: much less stand at a haughty distance, as if they were not disciples of a common master. Nor, may those of less attainments, "the weak," as Paul terms them, indulge even a censorious temper toward the others. Instead of such unseemliness, let us *judge* this *rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.* "O Christians," exclaims he, "your best interests are untouched by these inferior disagreements. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things*, viz. righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, *serveth Christ, is* ACCEPTABLE TO

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* Rom. xiv. 6.

God, *and approved of men.* Laying aside, therefore, all janglings and heart-burnings about other matters, *let us follow after the things which make for* PEACE; *and things wherewith one may* EDIFY, may build up, not pull down, *another.*[*] This was Paul's advice concerning disputes about the religious distinction of meats and days. And when the contest relative to circumcision had created warm blood between Christians, he pursued the same healing course. Perpetually calling them off from their subaltern polemics to their *great concern,* which was worth fighting, and bleeding, and burning for—he cries out, *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping of the commandments of God*[†]—is—every thing! And again, *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a* NEW CREATURE. *And as many as walk according to this rule,* viz. that it is the being a new creature in Christ Jesus, which contains the pith and marrow, the vigour and glory of our good confession, *peace be on them and mercy!* Circumcised or uncircumcised; laying stress upon this custom, or laying none, I have no quarrel with them; nor ought others to have any. For notwithstanding this dissent, they all are *the Israel of God;* and such they shall be found and acknowledged to be, when many who are at daggers-drawing about the carnal rite shall be disowned by their Judge. For my own part, saith the Apostle, I have things of much higher moment to fill up my heart, my hours, and my efforts. *I am set for the defence of the Gospel;* and will not descend to these petty conflicts. My back scarred with the scourge, my limbs bruised with stones, for the cross of Christ, will shew whether my resolution proceeds from a selfish motive, or from a proper estimate of a cause which will justify and repay my sufferings. *From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus!*[*] Sage and Hero! every man in whose heart the love of Jesus reigns, would fly to "kiss thy lips for giving so right an answer."[†]

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[*] Rom. xiii. 17—19. [†] Cor. vii. 19.

As was his doctrine, so was his example. He circumcised Timothy to sooth a Jewish prejudice[‡]—he submitted, by the advice of the Presbyters at Jerusalem, to a useless but harmless ceremony, in "purifying himself" along with "four men who had a vow on them;" for the express purpose of disproving the charge of his making war upon the "customs"—religious customs—customs belonging to *divine worship*, which converts from the Jews had retained from the ancient ceremonial.* Summarily, he accommodated himself to all classes of men, and all their customs, whenever such courtesy did not imply a surrender of truth. About customs *as* customs he strove not. Yet this same condescending, accommodating Paul, who went every length consistently with the safety of *substantial* principles, would not stir an hair's breadth at the hazard of injuring *them.* Here he was unyielding, unmanageable, inexorable as Death. Upon such terms, however innocent, or even laudable, customs and rites might be in themselves; however dear to a tender but misguided conscience, his maxim was—"Touch not, taste not, handle not." Remove this single objection—shew that his compliance was not exacted as an *approbation*—that no vital truth was to be wounded—and, "to the Jew he became as a Jew—to those under the law, as under the law—to those without the law, as without the law—to all men all things"†—for what purpose? To "gain some"—to promote the *common* salvation! This is *that* Paul the Apostle!

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[*] Gal. vi. 15—17. [†] Prov. xxiv. 26. [‡] Acts, xvi. 3.

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* Acts, xxi. 20—26. † 1 Cor. ix. 21.

The same spirit animated the church after he had left it. When the Jewish controversy was settled forever, there was still a variety of observances in different places. They *necessarily* arose out of different climate, previous habits, social institutions, national character; and were as necessarily continued, and naturally increased. The general fact is stated and explained in the ecclesiastical histories which are in every one's hands. They produced, however, no discord nor inconvenience, till about the middle of the second century, when sharp and vehement contests arose between the Asiatic and western Christians about the celebration of *Easter*. The former keeping this feast on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, at the time that the Jews celebrated their passover, *three days* before the anniversary of Christ's resurrection; the latter keeping it on the night *immediately preceding* that anniversary.* This difference may appear very trifling to those who do not observe Easter at all; but to the primitive Christians it was far from being a trifle. Their devotional habits, in many things inaccurate, and in this among the rest, made it a question of high importance.

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* Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 203.

Yet though neither party yielded to the other, they did not, on that account, break the bonds of charity.*

Toward the end of the century, Victor, bishop of Rome, as bishops were in those days, undertook to force upon the Asiatic Christians the custom of the west; and on their refusing to comply, "broke communion with them, pronounced them unworthy of the name of brethren, and excluded them from all fellowship with the church of Rome."† But Victor and his associates were obliged to give back; and both sides "retained their own customs until the fourth century, when the council of Nice abolished that of the Asiatics, and rendered the time of the celebration of Easter the same through all the Christian churches."‡

There is extant on this subject a fragment of Irenæus, being part of a letter which he wrote in his own name and the name of his brethren, to Victor; and which had great influence in healing the breach. It is worth inserting.

After admonishing Victor that he ought not, for such a reason, "to cut off from communion whole churches of God who observed the custom handed down from their ancestors," he adds:

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* Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 204. † Ib. p. 204, 205. ‡ Ib.

"Not only is there a controversy about the day, but about the very form, of the fast. For some think it ought to be kept for one day, others for two, others even for several; others measure for their term forty hours, including both night and day. And this variety among those who keep it, has not originated in our times, but prevailed long before us; our predecessors, it seems, not having been very scrupulous with regard to accuracy; but having adopted their custom in their simplicity and according to their peculiar feelings, handed it down, thus diversified, to the succeeding age. But all these were not, therefore, the less at peace among themselves, nor are we. *The difference about the fast commends the agreement in the faith.*

"The Presbyters who, before *Soter*, ruled the church which you now govern; we mean *Anicetus*, and *Pius*, and *Hyginus*, and *Telesphorus*, and *Xystus*, neither observed themselves, nor permitted their people to observe, the day which is kept by the Asiatic Christians: and, nevertheless, while they did not observe that day, they maintained peace* with the other Presbyters who did, when they visited them; although the observance was more obnoxious to them, than the non-observance to the Asiatics; yet never were any, on account of this diversity, cast out of the church. But the Presbyters who preceded you, and did not keep the day, *sent the Eucharist to the others who did.* And when blessed *Polycarp* went on a journey to Rome in the time of *Anicetus*, and they had some little difference about other matters, they immediately dropped it for the sake of peace; and would by no means cherish contention on this head. Anicetus could not, indeed, persuade Polycarp to relinquish his observance; as having always kept it with John, the disciple of the Lord, and the other Apostles with whom he had been conversant. Nor did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to adopt it, as he pleaded for the necessity of retaining the custom of the Presbyters who had gone before him. Yet while things were in this state, they *held communion with each other.* And in the church, Anicetus, from pure respect, *yielded to Polycarp the dispensation of the Eucharist*, and they amicably separated from each other; and the peace of the whole church was preserved, both by those who kept the day, and those who did not."* Thus Irenæus.

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* "Maintaining peace," in the phraseology of Irenæus and the primitive Christians, is equivalent with "holding communion."

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* The importance of this document, on several accounts, will be deemed a sufficient apology for accompanying it with the original, notwithstanding its length.

Ου γαρ μονον περι της ἡμερας εστιν ἡ αμφισβητησις, αλλα και περι του

In the next century there was a keen controversy concerning the validity of baptism administered by heretics, as well as concerning their readmission into the Catholic church. Stephanus, bishop of Rome, had acted with hauteur and even violence towards the celebrated Cyprian. This drew from Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea

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ειδους αυτου της νηστειας. 'Οι μεν γαρ οιονται μιαν ἡμεραν δειν αυτους νηστευειν· ὁι δε δυο, ὁι δε ϗ πλειονας· ὁι δε τεσσαρακοντα ὡρας, ἡμερινας τε ϗ νυκτερινας συμμετρουσι την ἡμεραν αυτων. Και τοιαυτη μεν ποικιλια των επιτηρουντων, ου νυν εφ' ἡμων γεγονυια, αλλα και ϖολυ ϖροτερον εϖι των ϖρο ἡμων, των ϖαρα το ακριβες, ὡς εικος, κρατουντων, την καθ' ἁπλοτητα ϗ ιδιωτισμον συνηθειαν εις το μετεϖειτα ϖεϖοιηκοτων. Και ουδεν ελαττον ϖαντες ὁυτοι ειρηνευσαν τε, ϗ ειρηνευομεν προς αλληλους· ϗ ἡ διαφωνια της νηστειας την ὁμονοιαν της ϖιστεως, συνιστησι.

Και ὁι ϖρο Σωτηρος ϖρεσβυτεροι ὁι ϖροσταντες της εκκλησιας, ἡς νυν αφηγῃ, Ανικητον λεγομεν και Πιον, Υγινον τε και Τελεσφορον, και Ξυστον, ουτε αυτοι ετηρησαν, ουτε τοις μετ' αυτους επετρεπον. Και ουδεν ελαττον αυτοι μη τηρουντες, ειρηνευον τοις αϖο των ϖαροικιων εν αἱς ετηρειτο, ερχομενοις ϖρος αυτους, καιτοι μαλλον εναντιον ην το τηρειν τοις μη τηρουσι· ϗ ουδεποτε δια το ειδος τουτο ἀπεβληθησαν τινες. Αλλ' αυτοι μη τηρουντες ὁι προ σου ϖρεσβυτεροι τοις αϖο των παροικιων τηρουσιν επεμπον ευχαριστιαν. Καιτον μακαριου Πολυκαρπου εϖιδημησαντος τῃ Ρωμῃ επι Ανικητου, και ϖερι αλλων τινων μικρα σχοντες προς αλληλους, ευθυς ειρηνευσαν, ϖερι τουτου του κεφαλαιου μη φιλεριστησαντες ἑαυτους. Ουτε γαρ ὁ Ανικητος τον Πολυκαρπον πεισαι εδυνατο μη τηρειν, ἁτε μετα Ιωαννου του μαθητου Κυριου ἡμων, ϗ λοιπων Αϖοστολων οἷς συνδιετριψεν, αει τετηρηκοτα· ουτε μην ὁ Πολυκαρϖος τον Ανικητον εϖεισε τηρειν, λεγοντα, την συνηθειαν των ϖρο αυτου ϖρεσβυτερων οφειλειν κατεχειν. Και τουτων ούτως εχοντων, εκοινωνησαν ἑαυτοις· ϗ εν τῃ εκκλησιᾳ ϖαρεχωρησε την ευχαριστιαν τῳ Πολυκαρπῳ, κατ' εντροϖην δηλονοτι, ϗ μετ' ειρηνης απ' αλληλων απηλλαγησαν, ϖασης της εκκλησιας ειρηνην εχοντων ϗ των τηρουντων, ϗ των μη τηρουντων.

Iren. ap. Euseb. H. E. L. VI. c. 24. T. I. p. 246—249.
Ed. *Reading*, 1720.

in Cappadocia, about A. D. 256, a letter to Cyprian, in which is the following statement.

"But that they who are at Rome do not entirely observe all things which have been handed down from the beginning; and that they appeal in vain to Apostolic authority for their own usages, any one may know from the fact of his seeing that there are some differences among them about the days on which the Paschal feast" (before Easter) "is to be kept; and about *many other particulars of divine worship*; and that they have not precisely the same observances there as prevail in Jerusalem. So likewise, in a very great number of other provinces, *many things vary according to the diversity of place and people; but nevertheless these variations have at no time infringed the peace and unity of the Catholic church*: which Stephanus has now dared to do; breaking that peace, in regard to you, which his predecessors always maintained with you," (the African churches) "in mutual love and honour."*

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* Eos autem qui Romæ sunt non ea in omnibus observare quæ sunt ab origine tradita, et frustra Apostolorum auctoritatem prætendere; scire quis etiam inde potest, quod circa celebrandos dies paschæ, et circa multa alia divinæ rei sacramenta, videat esse apud illos aliquas diversitates; nec observari illic omnia æqualiter quæ Hierosolymis observantur. Secundum quod in ceteris quoque plurimis provinciis, multa pro locorum et nominum diversitate variantur; nec tamen prop-

The great AUGUSTINE, bishop of Hippo, who flourished in the latter part of the fourth, and beginning of the fifth century, has settled this question with equal perspicuity and precision.

"Concerning the various observances in various places," says he, "there is one most wholesome rule to be followed: Wherever we see or know to be instituted customs which are not contrary to the faith, nor to good morals, and have any tendency to promote amendment of life, we ought, instead of disapproving, to commend and imitate them, if the infirmity of some do not oppose such a hindrance as shall produce more harm than our compliance can do good."*

Again: "I have often perceived, with pain and grief, that weak Christians are exceedingly disturbed by the contentious obstinacy or superstitious timidity of *some brethren*, who, in matters

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ter hoc ab Ecclesiæ Catholicæ pace atque unitate aliquando discessum est. Quod nunc Stephanus ausus est facere, rumpens adversum vos pacem quam semper antecessores ejus vobiscum amore et honore mutuo custodierunt. CYPRIANI OPP. part: II. p. 220.

* De iis quæ variè per diversa loca observantur, una in his saluberrima regula tenenda est—ut quæ non sunt contra Fidem, neque contra bonos mores, et habent aliquid ad exhortationem vitæ melioris, ubicunque institui videmus, vel instituta cognoscimus, non solum non improbemus, sed etiam laudando et imitando sectemur, si aliquorum infirmitas non ita impedit, ut majus detrimentum sit.

AUGUST. ep. 119. ad Januarium, cap. 18.
opp. T. II. col. 576.

of this sort, which cannot be certainly determined either by the authority of the Holy Scripture, or tradition of the universal church, or any utility in the reformation of life—led away by some petty reasoning of their own, or because they have been accustomed to see it so in their own country; or because they may have met with it in their travels, and fancy themselves so much the wiser—raise such litigious questions, as to think nothing right but what they do themselves."*

The venerable father has given us not merely his own judgment, but, indirectly, the judgment of the Catholic church. For he says that they were only "*some* brethren;" and those either "obstinate," or "superstitiously timid," or "conceited," who created any contention about difference of rites. With the church at large, then, there was none: but they concurred with him in the opinion, that in all such things "there is no course more becoming a dignified and prudent Christian, than to conform to the practice of that particular church which he may happen to visit."*

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* Sensi enim sæpe dolens et gemens multas infirmorum perturbationes fieri, per quorundam fratrum contentiosam obstinationem, vel superstitiosam timiditatem, qui in rebus hujusmodi, quæ neque Scripturæ sanctæ auctoritate, neque universalis ecclesiæ traditione; neque vitæ corrigendæ utilitate ad certum possunt terminum pervenire (tantum quia subest qualiscunque ratiocinatio cogitantis, aut quia in sua patria sic ipse consuevit, aut quia ibi vidit, ubi peregrinationem suam quo remotiorem a suis eo doctiorem factam putat) tam litigiosas excitant quæstiones, ut nisi quod ipsi faciunt, nihil rectum existiment.

AUGUST. ep. 118. ad eund. c. II.

2d., The primitive church did not consider her unity as broken, nor a sufficient cause of interrupting communion as afforded, by *imperfection in her moral discipline.*

That all the doctrines, precepts, promises, and threatenings of God's word, and all the institutions of his house, are designed and calculated to produce universal purity in heart and life, admits of no more doubt than the existence of the Bible. For this purpose he has invested the governours of the church with authority, and made it their indispensable duty, not only to instruct their people in "whatsoever things are true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report;"† but to enforce their instructions by vigilant pastoral inspection, and by moral coercion of delinquents. And for the execution of this, no less than of every other, part of their trust, they shall render an account to the Judge of the quick and dead. Yet he has himself informed them that the complete prevention or cure of abuses and scandals is beyond their reach—that tares will be so mingled with the wheat as to render their separation, by human hands, impracticable without the hazard of rooting up the wheat also—and that while, in the *wise* performance of their duty, they are to do the best which their circumstances permit, they must wait for the entire purgation of the church till the second coming of the SON OF MAN, who shall then "send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them who do iniquity."*

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* Nec disciplina ulla est in his melior gravi prudentique Christiano, quam ut eo modo agat quo agere viderit Ecclesiam ad quamcunque forte devenerit. AUGUST. *ut sup.*

† Phil. iv. 8.

Nevertheless there have not been wanting in the church of God attempts to effect what his word pronounces to be impossible. Zeal without knowledge—the generous but untrained ardour of juvenile reformers, who can be taught by experience alone, that "old Adam is too hard for young Melancthon"—the well meant but visionary projects of recluse devotion estranged from real life, and from the world, even the Christian world, as it actually exists—and, not unfrequently, that pragmatical officiousness which proclaims, with JEHU, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord!" and offers piles of incense on the altar of its own vanity, for every shred which it strews on the altar of God—all these things have set men at work to find or to erect an immaculate church. The success of the experiment has been worthy of its wit. But though it always has failed, and will forever fail, of accomplishing its professed aim; it never has failed, and never will fail, of producing one deplorable consequence. It engenders and nourishes a morbid humour, an unhappy fastidiousness, which make the religious temperament extremely irritable; fill the mind with disgust, and the mouth with complaint; and finally break up, or forbid, Christian fellowship under the pretence of superior purity; but, in very deed, for faults, if not trivial in themselves, yet too often trivial in comparison with the faults of the complainers.

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* Mat. xiii. 24—43.

But such causes of disunion or disaffection between churches; or of the withdrawing of individuals from communion, provided nothing sinful be *imposed* on them, receive no countenance from the judgment or example of the primitive Christians.

We know that grievous abuses prevailed in several even of the Apostolic churches—Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Crete, Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea,* were all stained in their discipline; some of them with very foul blots, as every one conversant in the New Testament knows. They were admonished, reproved, threatened, by the Lord Jesus himself, through his servants Paul and John; yet there is not a syllable enjoining upon others the disruption of communion with them; nor on the purer part of any of them to withdraw from the more depraved majority. On the contrary, the faithful few in Thyatira are simply encouraged and commanded to hold fast their integrity and their testimony.† Nor is there a single instance of Christ's directing his people, or any portion of them, to break off church communion by their own act, except in the case of their departure from apostate Rome. Now, although no conclusion can be drawn from these facts in favour of negligence, sloth, or other corruption in maintaining the law of God's house, yet they do show that, Christ Jesus himself being Judge, it is the duty of Christians rather to endeavour to rectify irregularities, than by deserting or disowning churches in which they prevail, to remove, as much as in them lies, the only human restraint upon the career of iniquity, and suffer it to "drown in destruction and perdition," all the remaining interest and glory of his cross.

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* Perhaps we may add the churches of the dispersion. See the ep. of James.

† Rev. ii. 24.

By this rule did the church walk after the days of the Apostles. Over the dishonour brought upon her name by the misconduct of some who bore it, did the noblest of her sons mourn; but they never thought of setting up separate communions. Sore as was their affliction on her account, they did not, in their haste, betake themselves to a remedy more fatal than the disease. Their scrupulousness on this head was the more remarkable, as there was much greater aberration from correct conduct among both clergy and laity, in the third century, than perhaps would be tolerated now in either by any evangelical church. And yet the most learned, laborious, holy men—the most stern reprovers of public declension, were the champions of *one* communion; and the most strenuous opposers of schism and separation.

The Novatian sect, which carried its rigour so far as to shut the doors of readmission upon the *lapsed*,* however penitent, refused to hold communion with the rest of the church expressly on account of her alleged corruptions. It was against them that CYPRIAN wrote his treatise on *the Unity of the Church:* the whole bent of which is to show that their separation was unscriptural and unlawful; and that they who will not hold communion with all and every part of the Catholic church, cast themselves out of her pale, and forfeit their share in her benefits. He urges the same doctrine in many of his letters. Take an example:

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* "*Lapsed*," was a term applied to those who after public reception, by baptism, into the Christian church, had fallen into any heinous sin; especially shrinking from their faith in the time of persecution.

"Although tares appear in the church, neither our faith nor our charity ought to be so hindered thereby, as that we should go out of the church because we perceive the tares to be in it. Our duty is to labour that we may be of the wheat; so that when the wheat shall be gathered into the Lord's garner, we may reap the fruit of our work. The Apostle says, that *in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour.* Let us, therefore, do our diligence, and labour with all our might, that we may be golden or silver vessels. But to break the earthen vessels belongs only to the Lord, in whose hands is the *rod of iron* The servant cannot be greater than his master; nor may any one claim to himself what the FATHER hath given to the SON alone; so as to imagine that he possesses ability to ventilate and 'purge the floor;' or, by human judgment, to separate universally the tares from the wheat. By such an attempt men display only a proud obstinacy and a sacrilegious presumption, the effect of depraved frenzy. And while they assume to themselves a power beyond the claims of mild righteousness, they *perish from the church.*"*

The DONATISTS in Africa, treading in the steps of the Novatians, set up a sectarian communion upon the very same pretext. "The church was polluted—there were bad men in her fellowship—their consciences would not permit them to remain, lest they should be contaminated."—Such were the alleged reasons of their schism. We know in what light their conduct was viewed. AUGUSTINE, their chief antagonist, and a formidable one he was, quotes CYPRIAN, to prove that he was only maintaining the doctrine which had been maintained before, and was the received doctrine among Christians. "In his letter to Antonianus," says Augustine, "he shows that before the final separation of the just and the unjust, *we are in no manner to withdraw from the unity of the church on account of the commixture of bad men with good*"*—and then transcribes a passage of the same purport, and nearly in the same words; though, if possible, still more pointed than the one above.

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* Nam etsi videntur in Ecclesia esse zizania, non tamen impediri debet aut fides aut caritas nostra, ut quoniam zizania esse in Ecclesia cernimus, ipsi de Ecclesia recedamus. Nobis tantummodo laborandum est ut frumentum esse possimus, ut cum cœperit frumentum Dominicis horreis condi, fructum pro opere nostro et labore capiamus. Apostolus in Epistola sua dicit; in domo autem magna non solum vasa sunt aurea et argentea, sed et lignea, et fictilia, et quædam quidem honorata, quædam vero inhonorata. Nos operam demus, et quantum possumus laboremus, ut vas aureum vel argenteum simus; ceterum fictilia vasa confringere Domino soli concessum est, cui et virga ferrea data est. Esse non potest major Domino suo servus. Nec quisquam sibi quod soli filio pater tribuit, vindicare potest; ut putet aut ad aream ventilandam et purgandam palam ferre se jam posse, aut a frumento universa zizania humano judicio segregare. Superba est ista obstinatio et sacrilega presumtio, quam sibi furor pravus assumit: et dum dominium sibi semper quidam plusquam mitis justitia deposcit, assumunt, de Ecclesia pereunt. CYP. ep. 54.

In another tract he goes yet further. "I do not say that I am to deny the communion of the

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* Cum enim ad Antonianum scribens ostenderet ante tempus ultimæ separationis Justorum et iniquorum, *nullo modo esse propter commixtionem malorum ab ecclesiæ unitate recedendum;* ubi declarat quam sit sanctus, et illa quam meruit martyrii claritate dignissimus, ait, "Quantus arrogantiæ tumor est; quanta humilitatis et lenitatis oblivio, et arrogantiæ suæ quanta jactatio, ut quis audeat aut facere se posse credat, quod nec apostolis concessit Dominus, ut zizania a frumento putet se posse discernere," &c.

AUGUST. *contra Donatistas, lib.* IV. Opp.
Tom. vii. col. 425. *Froben*, 1569.

Donatists to be of the church of Christ, because some who were bishops among them are convicted by ecclesiastical and civil processes of having burnt the sacred volumes—or because they did not carry their point in the trial by the bishops which they craved from the Emperor—or because, on their appeal to himself, they received from him a sentence of condemnation—or because there are among them leaders of the *Circumcelliones*—or because the Circumcelliones commit such atrocious crimes—or because some of them throw themselves headlong over precipices; or rush into the flames which they have kindled for themselves; or, by terrifying threats, compel others to massacre them, and court so many spontaneous and furious deaths, that they may be revered as saints and martyrs—or because drunken herds of male and female vagrants flock to their sepulchres, and there, by day and by night, revel in wine and wickedness, and corrupt themselves by the most flagitious enormities. Let all that rabble pass for their chaff, nor be of any prejudice to their wheat, if themselves adhere to the church of God."*

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* Nec ego dico ideo mihi esse credendum, communionem Donati non esse ecclesiam Christi, quia quidam, qui apud eos episcopi fuerunt, divina instrumenta ignibus tradidisse, gestis ecclesiasticis et municipalibus

He elsewhere addresses the Donatists in this animated style:

"You maintain that, by the contagion of wicked Africans," (i. e. by holding communion with the African churches, which the Donatists pronounced to be too impure for *their* fellowship) "by the contagion of wicked Africans, the church has perished from the face of the earth, excepting what remains in the party of Donatus, as in the 'wheat' separated from 'tares and chaff,' against the express declaration of Cyprian, who says, that neither do good men perish from the church on account of their commixture with the bad; nor can these same bad men be separated from their mixture with the good before the time of the divine Judgment. You are, therefore, according to your errour, or rather madness, com-

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et judicialibus convincuntur—aut quia in judicio episcoporum, quod ab Imperatore petiverunt, causam suam non obtinuerunt; aut quia provocantes ad ipsum Imperatorem, etiam ab ipso contrariam sibi sententiam meruerunt; aut quia tales sunt apud eos Circumcellionum principes; aut quia tanta mala committunt Circumcelliones; aut quia sunt apud eos qui se per abrupta præcipitent; vel concremando ignibus inferant, quos ipsi sibimet accenderunt; aut trucidationem suam etiam invitis hominibus terrendo extorqueant, et tot spontaneas et furiosas mortes, ut colantur ab hominibus, appetant; aut quod ad eorum sepulchra ebriosi greges vagorum et vagarum permixta nequitia die noctuque se vino sepeliant, flagitiisque corrumpant. Sit ista omnis turba palea eorum, nec frumentis præjudicet si ipsi ecclesiam tenent.

De unitate ecclesiæ, Opp. T. VII. col. 545, 6.

pelled to embrace in your accusation, all the churches of which we read in the apostolic and canonical scriptures—the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, Colossians, Philippians—the church of Jerusalem, Antioch, Smyrna, Thyatira, Sardis, Pergamos, Philadelphia, Laodicea—So many other churches of Pontus, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia; and all that range of country from Jerusalem unto Illyricum, which Paul testifies he had filled with the gospel: not to mention other regions of wide extent, into which the church, planted by Apostolic labours, has spread herself, and where she has grown and is growing still. Certainly all the churches here enumerated from the holy scriptures, situated so far from Africa, you are obliged to accuse as having perished through the sins of their African brethren. But the more easily to refute your errour—even those Africans whose sin you dare falsely to charge upon other nations—even those very Africans, I say, we are under no necessity of defending. If they are innocent, they are sharers with those transmarine churches in the kingdom of God—If guilty, they share with them as tares with the wheat; nor shall they be able to hurt, in Africa itself, those who, *although* KNOWING *their character, will not, on their* *account, separate themselves from the unity of the church.*"*

Than this testimony nothing more ample and decisive can be desired. It establishes the great

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* In the above extract the substantial facts have been regarded rather than a scrupulously literal translation. But lest any one should suppose that something more than brevity was intended, as the worthy Father, in speaking of the church at Jerusalem, asserts that the "*Apostle James was her first bishop,*" the reader is presented with the original passage entire.

Vos contagione malorum Aphrorum periisse dicitis de orbe terrarum, et in parte DONATI ejus reliquias remansisse, tanquam in frumentis a zizaniis et paleâ separatis; contra Cyprianum apertissimè sentientes, qui dicit nec malorum permixtione bonos perire in ecclesia, nec eosdem malos posse ante tempus Judicii divini a bonorum permixtione separari. Vos itaque, secundum vestrum errorem vel potius furorem, accusare cogimini non solum Cæcilianum et ordinatores ejus, verum etiam illas ecclesias quas in scripturis apostolicis et canonicis pariter legimus; non solùm Romanorum, quo ex Aphrica ordinare paucis vestris soletis episcopum, verùm etiam Corinthiorum, Galatarum, Ephesiorum, Thessalonicensium, Colossensium, Philippensium, ad quas apertissime scribit apostolus Paulus; Herosolymitanam, quam primus apostolus Jacobus episcopatu suo rexit. Antiochensem, ubi primò appellati sunt discipuli Christiani: Smyrnensem, Thiatirensem, Sardensem, Pergamensem, Philadelphiensem, Laodicensem, ad quas est apocalypsis apostoli Joannis. Tot alias ecclesias Ponti, Cappadociæ, Asiæ, Bithyniæ, ad quas scribit apostolus Petrus; et quicquid aliàs se Paulus ab Hierusalem usque Illyricum evangelio replevisse testatur: ut taceam de aliis tam latis atque universis terrarum partibus, in quas, ex his apostolicis laboribus et plantationibus, porrecta crevit et crescit ecclesia. Istas certè ecclesias quas ex literis divinis atque canonicis nominavi, tam longe ab Aphrica constitutas, tanquam perierint ex peccatis Aphricorum, accusare cogimini; nec corrigitis errorem qui vos ad tantum scelus nefaria dissensione compellit. Nos autem, ut istum errorem vestrum

fact, that the principles and conduct of the Donatists with regard to communion, Christian and ministerial, were at war with the faith and practice of the whole church of God. Otherwise they could not have condemned that church as having perished through the corruption of her unworthy members, nor have been themselves condemned as having unjustifiably withdrawn from her communion.* And wherein their general principles and practice in this matter, and their reasonings in defence of both, differ from those of such churches as will hold no communion but with the members of their own sect, let those good and pure-intentioned men who defend the restriction, most solemnly consider. In one thing there is, indeed, a remarkable difference.

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facilius convincamus, nec ipsos Aphros quorum falsò crimen in cæteras etiam gentes perfundere audetis, nec ipsos, inquam, defendere cogimur. Habent etiam cum illis transmarinis ecclesiis societatem regni si innocentes fuerint; si autem nocentes, tanquam zizania frumento: nec in Aphrica obesse potuerunt eis, qui se, *propter illos* ETIAM COGNITOS, *ab unitate ecclesiæ separare noluerunt.*

AUGUST. contra Cresconium, Lib. III. cap. 38.
Opp. Tom. VII. col. 244.

* Should it be imagined that this reasoning will apply no less to the Protestant reformation than to the schism of the Donatists; it will be sufficient to remark, that there was no difference in *radical doctrines of faith* between them and the orthodox, as there was between the Protestants and Papal Rome. She poisoned, by her corruptions, the waters of the sanctuary; and those who did not choose to drink death out of her cup were *compelled* to retire.

The latter acknowledge as true churches and exemplary Christians, many whose communion they notwithstanding reject. But the former saw that such a concession overturns the very foundation upon which a separate communion is reared. They, therefore, carried their principles through; and, in order to justify their schism, maintained that all but their own *had ceased to be true churches*. On this head, the palm of consistency, at least, must be awarded to the *Donatists!*

3d. Varieties of opinion and practice, with respect to the *modifications of her external order*, were not considered by the primitive church as inconsistent with her unity.

That there were such varieties; that the government of the church gradually altered from the apostolic form; and sooner in some places than in others; so that there were in actual existence at the same moment different forms of government in different parts of the church, all dissentients from the hierarchy agree. If, from the very days of the apostles downwards for more than fifteen hundred years, her order was uninterruptedly episcopal, as many advocates of episcopacy maintain; although even such an argument could not be admitted against *scriptural* proof, yet it would be extremely embarrassing to their opponents. The difficulty of explaining so strange a phenomenon, would create in conscientious men a fear that there must be some mistake in such a construction of holy writ as should be thwarted by it; and incline their minds to an interpretation with which it should be found to accord. The difficulty, however, does not exist. Stubborn facts in the history of the church refute the episcopal plea; and prove that her prelatical constitution was the result of changes which it required ages to effect.

It would be foreign from our purpose to investigate this proposition at large. Only a few facts shall be adduced to show that it has not been lightly advanced.

In the fourth century, JEROME, "who, in the judgment of Erasmus, was, without controversy, by far the most learned and most eloquent of all the Christians, and the prince of Christian divines,"* taught the same thing. His testimony, and the substance of the reasoning upon it, are extracted from the second volume of the Christian's Magazine.

"Thus he lays down both *doctrine* and *fact* relative to the government of the church, in his commentary on Titus, i. 5.

"*That thou shouldest ordain Presbyters in every*

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* CAVE, *His. Litt. Script. Eccles.* p. 171. Ed. 1720.

city, as I had appointed thee.[*] ‘What sort of Presbyters ought to be ordained he shows afterwards—*If any be blameless, the husband of one wife*, &c. and then adds, *for a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God*, &c. A *Presbyter*, therefore, is the *same* as a *bishop:* and before there were, *by the instigation of the devil*, parties in religion; and it was said among different people, *I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas*, the churches were governed by *the joint counsel of the Presbyters.* But *afterwards*, when every one accounted those whom he baptized as belonging to himself and not to Christ, it was *decreed throughout the whole world*, that one, chosen from among the Presbyters, should be put over the rest, and that the whole care of the church should be committed to him, and the seeds of schisms taken away.

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[*] “Qui qualis Presbyter debeat ordinari, in consequentibus disserens hoc ait: Si quis est sine crimine, unius uxoris vir,” et cætera: postea intulit, “Oportet n. Episcopum sine crimine esse, tanquam Dei dispensatorem.” Idem est ergo Presbyter, qui et Episcopus: et antequam, *diaboli instinctu*, studia in religione fierent, et diceretur in populis: “Ego sum Pauli, ego Apollo, ego autem Cephæ:” *communi Presbyterorum consilio* ecclesiæ gubernabantur. Postquam vero unusquisque eos, quos baptizaverat, suos putabat esse, non Christi: *in toto orbe decretum est, ut unus de Presbyteris electus superponeretur cæteris, ad quem omnis ecclesiæ cura pertineret*, et schismatum semina tollerentur. Putet aliquis non scripturarum, sed nostram, esse sententiam Episcopum et Presbyterum unum esse; et aliud ætatis, aliud esse nomen officii: relegat Apostoli ad Philippenses verba dicentis: Paulus et Timotheus servi Jesu Christi, omnibus sanctis in Christo Jesu, qui sunt Phillippis, cum episcopis et Diaconis, gratia vobis et pax, et reliqua. Phillippi *una* est urbs Macedoniæ: et certe in una civitate *plures* ut nuncupantur *Episcopi esse non poterant*. Sed quia *eosdem Episcopos illo tempore* quos et *Presbyteros* appellabant, propterea indifferenter de Episcopis quasi de Presbyteris est locutos. Adhuc hoc alicui videatur ambiguum, nisi altero testimonio comprobetur. In Actibus Apostolorum scriptum est, quod cum venisset Apostolus Miletum, miserit Ephesum, et vocaverit Presbyteros ecclesiæ ejusdem, quibus postea inter cætera sit locutus: *attendite vobis, et omni gregi in quo vos Spiritus sanctus posuit Episcopos, pascere ecclesiam Domini quam acquisivit per sanguinem suum.* Et hoc diligentius observate, quo modo *unius civitatis* Ephesi *Presbyteros* vocans, postea eosdem *Episcopos* dixerit—Hæc propterea, ut ostenderemus *apud veteres* eosdem fuisse Presbyteros quos et Episcopos. *Paulatim* vero, ut dissensionum plantaria evellerentur, ad *unum* omnem solicitudinem esse delatam.—Sicut ergo Presbyteri *sciunt se ex ecclesiæ consuetudine* ei, qui sibi propositus fuerit, esse subjectos, ita Episcopi noverint se *magis consuetudine quam dispositionis dominicæ veritate*, Presbyteris esse majores.

HIERONYMI *Com. in Tit.* I. 1. *Opp. Tom.* VI.
p. 168. *ed. Victorii, Paris*, 1623. *Fol.*

'Should any one think that this is my private opinion, and not the doctrine of the Scriptures, let him read the words of the apostle in his epistle to the Philippians; 'Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons,' &c. Philippi is a *single* city of Macedonia; and certainly in one city there could not be *several bishops*, as they are now styled; but as they, at that time, called the very same persons bishops whom they called Presbyters, the Apostle has spoken without distinction of bishops as Presbyters.

'Should this matter yet appear doubtful to any one, unless it be proved by an additional testimony; it is written in the acts of the Apostles, that when Paul had come to Miletum, he sent to Ephesus and called the Presbyters of that church, and among other things said to them, 'take heed to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops.' Take particular notice, that calling the PRESBYTERS of the single city of Ephesus, he afterwards names the same persons BISHOPS.' After further quotations from the epistle to the Hebrews, and from Peter, he proceeds: 'Our intention in these remarks is to show that among the ancients, *Presbyters and Bishops were* THE VERY SAME. But that BY LITTLE AND LITTLE, that the plants of dissentions might be plucked up, the whole concern was devolved upon an individual. As the Presbyters, therefore, KNOW that they are subjected, BY THE CUSTOM OF THE CHURCH, to him who is set over them; so let the Bishops know, that they are greater than Presbyters MORE BY CUSTOM than by ANY REAL APPOINTMENT OF CHRIST.'

"He pursues the same argument with great point, in his famous epistle to Evagrius, asserting and proving from the Scriptures, that in the beginning, and during the Apostles' days, a Bishop and a Presbyter were the same thing. He then goes on: 'As to the fact, that AFTERWARDS one was ELECTED to preside over the rest, this was done as a remedy against schism; lest every one, drawing his proselytes to himself, should rend the church of Christ. For even at Alexandria, from the Evangelist Mark to the Bishops Heraclas and Dionysius, the Presbyters always chose one of their number, placed him in a superior station, and gave him the title of Bishop: in the same manner as if an army should MAKE an emperor; or the deacons should choose from among themselves, one whom they knew to be particularly active, and should call him ARCH-DEACON. For, excepting ordination, what is done by a Bishop which may not be done by a Presbyter? Nor is it to be supposed, that the church should be one thing at Rome, and another in all the world besides. Both France, and Britain, and Africa, and Persia, and the East, and India, and all the barbarous nations, worship one Christ, observe one rule of truth. If you demand authority, the globe is greater than a city. Wherever a Bishop shall be found, whether at Rome, or Eugubium, or Constantinople, or Rhegium, or Alexandria, or Tanis, he has the same pretensions, the same priesthood.'* Observe,

"1. Jerome expressly denies the superiority of Bishops to Presbyters, by *divine right.* To prove his assertion on this head, he goes directly to the scriptures; and argues, as the advocates of parity do, from the interchangeable titles of Bishop and Presbyter; from the *directions* given to them without the least intimation of difference in their authority; and from the *powers* of Presbyters, undisputed in this day.

"2. Jerome states it as a *historical fact*, that, in the original constitution of the church, before the devil had as much influence as he acquired afterwards, *the churches were governed by the joint counsels of the Presbyters.*

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[*] Quod autem postea *unus electus* est, qui cæteris præponeretur, in schismatis remedium factum est: ne unusquisque ad se trahens Christi Ecclesiam rumperet. Nam et Alexandriæ a Marco Evangelista usque ad Heraclam et Dionysium Episcopos, *semper unum ex se selectum, in excelsiori gradu collocatum, Episcopum nominabant:* quomodo si exercitus imperatorem *faciat;* aut diaconi *eligant de se*, quem industrium noverint, et *archidiaconum vocent.* Quid enim facit, *excepta ordinatione, Episcopus*, quod *presbyter non faciat?* Nec altera Romanæ urbis Ecclesia, altera totius orbis existimanda est. Et Galliæ, et Brittaniæ, et Africa, et Persis, et Oriens, et India, et omnes barbaræ nationes unum Christum adorant, unam observant regulam veritatis. Si auctoritas quæritur, orbis major est urbe Ubicumque fuerit Episcopus, sive Romæ, sive Eugubii, sive Constantinopoli, sive Rhegii, sive Alexandriæ, sive Tanis; ejusdem meriti, ejusdem et sacerdotii. *Hieron. Opp. T.* II. p. 624.

"3. JEROME states it as a *historical fact*, that this government of the churches, *by Presbyters alone*, continued until, for the avoiding of scandalous quarrels and schisms, it was thought expedient to *alter* it. '*Afterwards*,' says he, 'when every one accounted those whom he baptized as belonging to himself and not to Christ, it was *decreed throughout the whole world*, that one, chosen from among the Presbyters, should be put over the rest; and that the whole care of the church should be committed to him.'

"4. JEROME states it as a *historical fact*, that this change in the government of the church—this creation of a superiour order of ministers, took place, not at once, but *by degrees*—'*Paulatim*,' says he, 'by little and little.' The precise date on which this innovation upon primitive order *commenced*, he does not mention; but he says positively, that it did not take place till the factious spirit of the Corinthians had spread itself in different countries, to an alarming extent. '*In populis*,' is his expression. Assuredly, this was not the work of a day. It had not been accomplished when the apostolic epistles were written, because Jerome appeals to these for proof that the churches were then governed by the joint counsels of Presbyters; and it is incredible that such ruinous dissentions, had they existed, should not have been noticed in letters to others beside the Corinthians. The disease, indeed, was of a nature to spread rapidly; but still it must have had time to travel. With all the zeal of Satan himself, and of a parcel of wicked or foolish clergymen to help him, it could not march from people to people, and clime to clime, but in a course of years.

" 5. JEROME states as *historical facts*, that the elevation of one Presbyter over the others, was a *human contrivance*;—was not *imposed* by authority, but *crept in by custom*;—and that the Presbyters of his day *knew* this very well. '*As, therefore*,' says he, '*the Presbyters* KNOW *that they are subjected to their superiour by* CUSTOM; *so let the bishops know that they are above the Presbyters, rather by the* CUSTOM OF THE CHURCH, *than by the Lord's appointment*.'

" 6. JEROME states it as a *historical fact*, that the first bishops were made by the *Presbyters themselves*; and consequently they could neither have, nor communicate any authority above that of Presbyters. '*Afterwards*,' says he, ' to prevent schism, one was *elected* to preside over the rest.' Elected and commissioned by whom? By the *Presbyters*: for he immediately gives you a broad fact which it is impossible to explain away. ' At Alexandria,' he tells you, ' from the evangelist Mark, to the Bishops Heraclas and Dionysius,' i. e. till about the middle of the third century, 'the Presbyters *always chose* one of their number, *placed him in a superior station*, and gave him the title of *Bishop*.'

"7. Jerome states it as a *historical fact*, that even in his own day, that is, toward the end of the fourth century, there was no power, excepting ordination, exercised by a Bishop, which might not be exercised by a Presbyter. 'What does a Bishop,' he asks, 'excepting ordination, which a Presbyter *may not* do?'

"Two observations force themselves upon us.

"1st. Jerome challenges the whole world, to show in what prerogative a Presbyter was, at *that time*, inferiour to a Bishop, excepting the single power of ordination. A challenge which common sense would have repressed, had public opinion concerning the *rights* of Presbyters allowed it to be successfully met.

"2d. Although it appears from Jerome himself, that the prelates were not then in the habit of associating the Presbyters with themselves, in an equal right of *government*, yet, as he told the former, to their faces, that the right was undeniable, and ought to be respected by them, it presents us with a strong fact in the *progress* of Episcopacy. Here was a power in Presbyters, which, though undisputed, lay, for the most part, dormant. The transition from disuse to denial, and from denial to extinction, of powers which the possessors have not vigilance, integrity, or spirit to enforce, is natural, short, and rapid. According to Jerome's declaration, the hierarchy did not pretend to the exclusive right of government. Therefore, there was but *half* a hierarchy, according to the present system. That the Bishops had, some time after, the powers of ordination and government both, is clear. How did they acquire the monopoly? By apostolic institution? No. Jerome refutes that opinion from the Scriptures and history. By apostolic tradition? No. For, in the latter part of the fourth century, their single prerogative over Presbyters was the power of ordination. Government was at first exercised by the Presbyters in common. When they had, by their own act, placed a superiour over their own heads, they rewarded his distinction, his toils, and his perils, with a proportionate reverence; they grew slack about the maintenance of troublesome privilege; till at length their courtesy, their indolence, their love of peace, or their hope of promotion, permitted their high and venerable trust to glide into the hands of the prelates. We have no doubt that the course of the *ordaining power* was similar, though swifter."

*"This testimony of Jerome is seconded by a more full one of Eutychius, Patriarch of Alexandria, who, out of the Records and Traditions of that church, in his Arabick Originals thereof, saith, (according to Selden's Translation in his Comment. p. 29, 30.) 'Mark the Evangelist ordained, along with *Hananias*, twelve Presbyters, who were always to remain with the Patriarch; so that when the Patriarchate should be vacant, they should elect, from the twelve Presbyters, one *on whose head the other eleven should impose their hands and bless him, and create him Patriarch:* and then should choose some other distinguished man, as a fellow Presbyter, in the place of him who was thus made Patriarch, so that their number should always be twelve. Nor did this institution concerning the Presbyters, viz. that *the Patriarch should be created from these Presbyters, go into disuse before the time of* ALEXANDER, *Patriarch of Alexandria*, 318. He *forbad the Presbyters to create* a Patriarch from that time: and decreed, that on the death of one Patriarch, the Bishops should meet and ordain

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* In the following extract from Dr. OWEN's *Plea for Scripture ordination*, the Latin quotations are translated by the author of this work, for the benefit of the unlearned reader; and the quotations themselves thrown into the margin.

his successor. He also decreed that, in case of a vacancy, they should, without regard to place, choose either from among these twelve Presbyters or any others, some man of peculiar worth, and give him the title of Patriarch. And *thus vanished that more ancient institution, according to which the Patriarch used to be created by Presbyters; and in its place came the above decree for creating him by Bishops.**'

"Here is a full proof of Presbyters choosing and creating their Bishop, (whom Eutychius, speaking in the language of his age, calls Patriarch,) and that by imposition of hands and benediction, or prayer, without any other consecration: which custom continued several ages, until at last the neighbouring Bishops usurped the power of consecration, and left the Presbyters neither the choice nor the creation of their Bishop.

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* 'Constituit item Marcus Evangelista duodecim Presbyteros cum Hanania, qui semper manerent cum Patriarcha, adeo ut cum vacaret Patriarchatus eligerent unum e duodecim Presbyteris, *cujus capiti reliqui undecim manus imponerent eumque benedicerent, et Patriarcham eum crearent*: et dein virum aliquem insignem eligerent, eumque Presbyterum secum constituerent, loco ejus qui sic factus est, Patriarcha, ita ut semper extarent duodecim. *Neque desiit* ALEXANDRIÆ *institutum hoc de Presbyteris, ut scilicet Patriarchæ crearentur e Presbyteris duodecim, usque ad tempora* ALEXANDRI *Patriarchæ Alexandrini, qui fuit ex numero illo* 318. *Is autem vetuit, ne deinceps Patriarcham Presbyteri crearent*, et decrevit ut, mortuo Patriarcha, convenirent Episcopi qui Patriarcham ordinarent. Decrevit item ut, vacante Patriarchatu, eligerent sive ex quacumque regione, sive ex duodecim illis Presbyteris, sive aliis, ut res ferebat, virum aliquem eximium, eumque Patriarcham vocarent; *atque ita evanuit institutum illud antiquius, quo creari solitus a Presbyteris Patriarcha, et successit in locum ejus decretum de Patriarcha ab Episcopis creando.*'

"Here we have also an instance of Presbyters making Presbyters; for Eutychius tells us, that the same Presbyters that made their Bishop, chose and ordained another person Presbyter in his room; and so constituted both Presbyters and Bishops for several ages together.

"The Bishop of Worcester* tells us, out of Johannes Cassianus, that about the year 390, one Abbot Daniel, inferior to none in the desart Scetis, was made a Deacon 'by PAPHNUTIUS, a Presbyter of the same retreat; for so greatly was he charmed with the abbot's virtues, that he was eager to associate with himself in the honour of the Priesthood also, one whom he knew to be his own equal in the excellence of his life. Unable, therefore, to bear the thought that he should remain any longer in the inferior order of the ministry, and anxious to provide for himself a most worthy successor, he promoted Daniel, during his own lifetime, to the honour of the Presbyterial office.†

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* *Stilling. Iren. p.* 380.

† A B. Paphnutio solitudinis ejusdem Presbytero: in tantum enim virtutibus ejus adgaudebat, ut quem vitæ meritis sibi et gratia parem

"Here is a Presbyter ordained by a Presbyter, which we no where read was pronounced null by Theophilus, then Bishop of Alexandria, or any other of that time. Had it been either irregular or unusual, doubtless it had been censured.

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"The power of ordination and government was in the hands of the captive Presbyters, under the Scythians beyond Ister, for about seventy years, from the year 260, to the year 327; the former being the year of their captivity under Galienus, the latter of the change of the government under Constantine, when Urphilas was created Bishop by Eusebius, and others.*

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"Hilary, or whoever was the Author in Q. ex utroque Test. mixtim, affirms, That in Alexandria, and throughout all Egypt, if a bishop be wanting, a presbyter consecrates.† It cannot be said that "consecrate" here signifies the consecration of the eucharist, for this might be

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noverat, coæquare sibi etiam Sacerdotii honore festinaret. Siquidem nequaquam ferens in inferiore eum ministerio diutius immorari, optansque sibimet successionem dignissimam providere, superstes eum Presbyterii honore provexit.

* *Philostorg.* lib. 2. cap. 5. in *Blond.* Apol.

† In Alexandria et per totam Ægyptum si desit Episcopus, consecrat Presbyter. Q. 2. 101.

done by the Presbyter when the Bishop was present.* If it be taken for confirmation, it doth not prejudice our cause; for the Canon limits the power of confirmation as well as ordination to the Bishop, as was also the power of consecrating churches, if any should take the word in that sense.

"We may understand the meaning by a parallel place of Hilary in Ambrose, who thus speaks:†

"The writings of the Apostle" (Paul) "do not in all things agree with the ordination which is now in the church: for even Timothy, (1 Tim. 4, 12. 2 Tim. 16. a Presbyter created by himself) he calls 'Bishop;' because the Presbyters were originally called Bishops; so that as one left the office, another who was next to him should take his place. Finally, the Presbyters in Egypt do, at this day, consecrate if a Bishop be not present. But because the Presbyters, who followed next in order, began to be found unworthy of holding the first rank; the mode was changed by the care of a council, so that not the order of rotation, but merit, should make a Bishop, when constituted by the judgment of a number of priests; lest an unfit person should seize the office at random, and be a scandal to many."*

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* Præsente Episcopo. † Comment. in Eph. 4.

"The same Author saith also, in Tim, 3. "After the *Bishop* he subjoins the order of the *Deacon.* For what other reason than this, that a Bishop and Presbyter have the same ordination. For each of them is a priest, but the Bishop is first."†

"Here note,

"1. That the ordination in Hilary's time did not in all things agree with the writings of the Apostle. That he speaks of the ordination of Ministers is evident by the following words: "A Presbyter created by himself."

"2. At first, Presbyters and Bishops were of the same order and office, and had but one ordi-

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[*] Ideo non per omnia conveniunt scripta Apostoli Ordinationi quæ nunc in Ecclesia est, quia hæc inter ipsa primordia sunt scripta; nam et Timotheum (1 Tim. 4, 14. 2 Tim. 1, 5. Presbyterum a se creatum) Episcopum vocat, quia primum Presbyteri Episcopi appellabantur, ut recedente uno, sequens ei succederet. Denique apud Ægyptum Presbyteri consignant, si præsens non sit Episcopus. Sed quia cœperunt sequentes Presbyteri indigni inveniri ad primatus tenendos, immutata est ratio prospiciente Concilio, ut non Ordo, sed meritum crearet Episcopum, multorum Sacerdotum judicio constitutum, ne indignus temere usurparet, et esset multis scandalum.

[†] Hilar. Diac. in Tim. 3. Post Episcopum, Diaconi Ordinem subjicit. Quare, nisi quia Episcopi et Presbyteri una Ordinatio est? Uterque enim Sacerdos est, sed Episcopus primus est.

nation. "The ordination of a Bishop and Presbyter is the same," which shows the meaning of "Ordinatio" in the former paragraph. The Bishop, in Hilary's time, which was about the year 380, under Damasus,* was but primus Sacerdos, (first priest,) "and not of a superior order: Peter is called πρωτος, primus Apostolus, (first Apostle) Matth. 10, 2. and yet Protestants hold all the Apostles to be equal.

"3. Spalatensis† infers from this quotation, that at the beginning, when a Bishop died, there was not so much as an election of him that was to succeed, (much less any new ordination,) but the eldest Presbyter came into the room of the deceased Bishop. See the preface to Blondel's Apology, p. 11, and 31.

"4. There was a change in the way of choosing their Bishop; "that not order," viz. order of rotation, "but merit, should make a Bishop."

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"5. After this change the Presbyters chose and made their Bishop; for so Hilarius affirms him to be—"Constituted by the judgment of a number of Priests."

"6. He adds, that in Egypt, "the Presbyters consecrate, if no Bishop be present." He speaks in the foregoing words of the identity of Bishops and Presbyters, and he brings this as a confirmation of it, that in the absence of the Bishop they might do those things which custom had appropriated to the Bishops. "Consignare," is some act of prerogative that the Bishops challenged to themselves, which yet in their absence the Presbyters might perform. Whether we understand it of ordination or confirmation, in which they did 'Chrismate consignare,' it is not material, for both were reserved to the Bishop by the Canons. Though by comparing this with the scope of Hilary's discourse, and with the quotation out of the questions under Austin's name, 'If a Bishop be wanting, a Presbyter consecrates,' it should seem evidently meant of ordination; especially when we find "consignare" to be taken for "consecrare" in several authors, Arnob. lib. 3. Cypr. Ep. 2. Tu tantum quem jam Spiritalibus castris cœlestis militia signavit."*

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* *Hilar.*

† De Repub. Eccles. l. 3. c. 3.

To close this article. A Diocese, i. e. a district under the government of a single Bishop, contained, in the fourth century, a large number of congregations, and could not possibly be served by the ministrations in word, sacraments, and family inspection, by a single man. Some episcopal sees were of great extent. That of AUGUSTINE, Bishop of Hippo, was no less than forty miles long.* Summarily, Bishops, in those days, were a sort of ecclesiastical princes, having thousands and ten thousands of ecclesiastical subjects under their jurisdiction. This will not be disputed. But a primitive Bishop and bishoprick were quite other matters; the declaration of Mr. BINGHAM to the contrary notwithstanding.† We have yet, among what are accounted the genuine epistles of IGNATIUS, a letter to his friend POLYCARP Bishop of *Smyrna*, and a cotemporary of the Apostle JOHN. In that letter he gives the following advice to Polycarp, with regard to the exercise of his episcopal functions:

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* Owen's *Plea, &c.* p. 128—140.

"Let not the widows be neglected. Next to the Lord, do thou exercise care over them. Let nothing be done without thy sanction—Let your assemblies be held frequently. Inquire after all by name. *Do not overlook the men and maid ser-*

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* BINGHAM, *Orig. Eccles.* B. IX. ch. 2. Vol. I. p. 353. Fol.

† This very learned Divine says, that the "church, in settling the bounds of Dioceses," according to "her first and primitive model—went by the rule of government in every city, including not only the city itself, but the suburbs or region lying about it within the verge of its jurisdiction."

Orig. Eccles. Book IX. c. 2. Vol. I. 351.

vants. Yet let them not be puffed up: but le them yield more perfect service to the glory o God, that they may obtain from him a bette freedom. Let them not seek to acquire thei freedom at the public expense, lest they shoul be found to be slaves of lust."* Here Bisho Polycarp is directed to attend, in person, to th church's widows—to meet with his people *fr quently*—to inquire after them all by *name;* eve down to the *very slaves*—to see that this notic *from their Bishop* be not abused by them, so to grow unruly, and to express impatience und their condition, and an improper expectation being ransomed and set at liberty by the church charity.

These were *then* the functions of a Bisho IGNATIUS being judge. What must have bee the size of Polycarp's diocese to admit of h performing them? How could they be perfor ed in the fourth century by a Bishop of Hip through a diocese forty miles long in a populo country? Or by a Bishop of Rome towards cure of more than a million of souls in the city alone?[*] One would think that the episcopal powers and occupations of AUGUSTINE or LIBERIUS could hardly have been *quite* the same with those of POLYCARP.

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* Αἱ χηραι μη αμελειθωσαν. μετα τον κυριον συ αυτων φροντιστης εσο. μ ανευ της γνωμης σου γινεσθω—πυκνοτερον συναγωγαι γινεσθωσαν. εξ ΟΝ ΜΑΤΟΣ ΠΑΝΤΑΣ ζητει. δουλους ϗ δουλας μη ὑπερηφανει· αλλα μ αυτοι φυσιουσθωσαν, αλλ' εις δοξαν Θεου πλειον δουλευετωσαν, ἱνα κρειτ νος ελευθεριας τυχωσιν απο Θεου. μη ἁιρετωσαν απο του κοινου ελευθερ θαι, ἱνα μη δουλοι ἑυρεθωσιν επιθυμιας.

IGNAT. Ep. ad POLYCARP. apud PP. App. Tom. II. p. 91.
ed. CLERICI. Fol. 179

It appears then, that the form of church government gradually altered, so as to become, in process of time, very different from the apostolic establishment: and even if this be denied, it is beyond all doubt that different *opinions* prevailed in the primitive church concerning her original order. For, not to mention that JEROME could hardly be alone in his views; could hardly have appealed to the knowledge which the Presbyters of his day had of their own rights, though nearly dormant—the very same sentiments were maintained with great acceptance among good people, by AERIUS, a monk and Presbyter of Armenia, in the fourth century; and produced uneasiness throughout the extensive districts of Armenia, Pontus, and Cappadocia.[†]

Yet all this variety of opinion and practice in the matter of church-order, did not produce, and therefore was not thought sufficient to warrant,

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[*] GIBBON's Decl. and Fall. Vol. V. p. 289. 8vo. 1811.

[†] MOSHEIM, Vol. I. p. 376. MORERI, *Grand Dictionnaire Historique*, art. AERIUS, T. I. p. 168. Aerius has been charged with the Arian heresy. A charge which seems to be at least doubtful. But whether ill or well founded, it can have no influence upon the case before us.

separate communions. For neither did Jerome Aerius, and their adherents, who openly attacked the episcopacy of their day as destitute o scriptural or apostolic sanction, withdraw, o that account, from the fellowship of the Catholic church, and set up, like the Novatians an Donatists, a church of their own; nor was there so far as I have been able to ascertain, any suc measure taken, nor any rent among Christians occasioned, in virtue of disagreements under tha head. However animated their discussions, an strong the conflict of their feelings, neither di the opposers of the then existing order break o communion with its advocates; nor its advocate who were the practical majority, expel their opposers. In different places they maintained thei different order, and in the same place their di ferent sentiments, without bursting the bands their common union. On the contrary, it is wo thy of special remark, that Jerome himself, wh of all others, most boldly bearded his cotemp rary prelates, and proved their official superiori to be *against* the word of God, yet shuddered at t thought of separation, and condemned separatis in terms of unqualified reprobation. On Prov. 16—19. especially on those words, *He that so eth discord among brethren*, he thus comments: T wise man, "enumerates six capital crimes; whic however, in comparison with 'the sower of d cord,' he puts by as of minor importance: because the rupture of that unity and brotherhood which the grace of the Holy Ghost hath formed, is the most atrocious deed of the whole. For a man may lift up his eyes in pride; may be guilty of lying; may be polluted with murder; may plot mischief against his neighbour; may employ his members in other enormities—a profligate man, I say, may bring these mischiefs upon himself or others, and yet the peace of the church be preserved. But Donatus, and Arius, and their followers, *have done what is worse; for they have cut asunder the harmony of brotherly union by sowing discord.*"*

The result is, that different views and practices in the article of her government, were not deemed by the primitive church to be inconsistent with her unity—with her one communion; nor a justifiable cause of interrupting it.

4th. The same thing is to be said of differences in *subordinate points of doctrine.*

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* Enumerat sex capitalia crimina, quæ tamen, *comparatione discordiam seminantis, quasi minora deponit: quia nimirum majus est facinus illud quo unitas et fraternitas quæ per Spiritus Sancti gratiam est connexa, dissipatur.* Potest enim quilibet oculos jactanter extollere; lingua mentiri; homicidio pollui; mala proximo machinari; aliis sceleribus membra subdere—Potest, inquam, perditus quisque hujusmodi mala vel sibimetipsi vel aliis inferre, pace servata Ecclesiæ. At *Donatus* et *Arius*, et eorum sequaces, *grarius est quod fecere: qui concordiam fraternæ unitatis, discordias seminando, sciderunt.*

Hieron. opp. T. VIII. p. 81. Fol. Paris, 1623.

By "subordinate doctrines" are meant all those which may be either believed or doubted, without sacrificing any vital principle of the Christian Religion.

To draw the line of distinction between the essentials and non-essentials of our most Holy Faith, is at all times a delicate and difficult task. To draw it with perfect accuracy is what no prudent man will attempt. But that the distinction exists, that it cannot be abolished, and that it is attended with important consequences, no man of sober sense will deny. All the members of the human body belong to its perfection, and have their peculiar uses. Yet a finger or a toe does not hold the same place in the system with an arm or a leg; nor an arm or leg the same place with the head or the heart. The amputation of a finger *may* occasion death: the amputation of a larger member often does it. At the same time this operation does not necessarily involve the death of the patient; and when limited to the extremities, frequently subjects him to inconveniences comparatively small. No one thinks of disputing his *humanity* on account of such a privation. He may lose a limb, and yet be active, useful, honoured, happy; much more so than many who escape his misfortune: because he may have more *life* in his remaining members than they have in their whole number. But his head, his heart, the substance of his body, are *essential*. Lop off his arm, and his recovery may be dubious—death *may* ensue. But cut off his head, cleave his heart, divide his body, and the blow is *fatal*—there is an end of the *man*.

Thus also in the system of revelation. All, the very least, of its truths belong to its perfection. Not one of them may voluntarily be renounced; nor any contrary errour be knowingly embraced. Because, he who does either, resists the *obligation* to "receive and obey the truth." Just as he who "keeps the whole law, and yet offends in one point, is guilty of all."* The entire authority of the lawgiver is in every precept. Sin, therefore, which is "transgression of the law," whatever precept it may happen to infringe, strikes at the *principle* of obedience; and is ready, as occasion shall offer, to assume any and every form of transgression—to violate *all* the precepts of the law in succession, when impelled by adequate inducement. For he—to continue the Apostle's reasoning—he who "kills," though he may "not commit adultery," abstains from the latter crime through the influence of other considerations than the sacredness of the law, or the majesty of the lawgiver; otherwise he would have refrained from "killing;" seeing that "he who said, *Do not commit adultery*, said also, *Do not kill.*" Consequently, he who breaks one commandment while he keeps another, when both are enjoined by the same authority, shows that he is prepared, on the occurrence of a suitable temptation, to break the other also. And whoever disbelieves this of himself, "deceiveth his own heart;" for sin is universal opposition to all of God in all of his law: and, therefore, according to the inspired ethics, the transgression of one precept is accounted simply "a transgression of the law;" being an act of rebellion against its *whole obligation* as operating in that precept. It is upon this ground, that living in the commission of any *known* sin, however small it may appear, proves men to be destitute of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because they are under the power of the *principle of sin*, which is "*enmity* against God;" and have not been "*reconciled* to God by the death of his Son." So that to venture upon sin, knowing it to be sin, is a desperate experiment in any one who does not intend to "lose his soul."

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* James, i. 10

In like manner, resistance to God's truth, to *any* of his truths when perceived to be truth, argues the predominance of the spirit of falsehood—a spirit which, as opportunity should serve, would not hesitate to relinquish *every* truth of his most holy word. Hence no Christian can surrender the least tittle of that truth which he believes to be the testimony of his God; nor do any act which implies such a surrender. Thousands of the "martyrs of Jesus," might have saved themselves from the wild beast or the stake, would they only have thrown a handful of incense on a Heathen altar. But they were aware of the construction which their persecutors would put upon this deed; and, rather than do it, "loved not their lives unto the death." No motives, then, of conscience, peace, charity, good to be effected, or of what kind soever, can justify, much less require, under any possible circumstances, the sacrifice of a known truth. Such a sacrifice might end in eternal ruin. On the other hand, *mistakes* concerning particular truths, may consist with the general power of truth over the heart. Nay, it is nothing uncommon for men's *notions* to be at war with their *principles*—Their speculative judgment with their practical habits. Many times a sound head is joined to a rotten heart; and a sound heart to a rotten head. Some perish because they do not follow out their professed faith: and others would perish if they did. The not perceiving, and therefore not embracing, the consequences of their errour preserves them "from going down to the pit." And as there is not a human being perfectly exempt from errour, there is not one of all them who "shall see the Lord," but owes more or less to the same protection. How far erroneous conceptions of divine truth may be compatible with a state of pardon and heavenly adoption, it would be presumptuous in us to define. That is the prerogative of him who, searching the heart, can weigh all its influences, interests, and difficulties. But to try how far we may go before we discern our salvation to be in jeopardy, is the insanity of one who should have his limbs amputated higher and higher in order to try how near the operation might approach his vitals without destroying his life. In judging for *himself*, every one must make sure work by keeping on the safe side, not wilfully rejecting any truth, or adopting any errour. In judging of others, he must go every length which the charity of the gospel dictates; i. e. every length consistent with his own attachment to, and support of, the truth; and which does not rank, among matters of forbearance, a clearly vital doctrine of Christianity. This would be not charity, but treason and murder—Treason to the

"AMEN, the faithful and true witness"—murder to the soul of our deluded neighbour. For as there are injuries which infallibly kill the body, so there are errours which infallibly kill the soul. If a man be run through the heart, whether by accident or design, whether by his own or another's hand, he *dies.* And if a man, from whatever cause, renounce the obviously vital doctrines of the gospel—he is not, cannot be, a Christian—there is no relief for him; no help; no hope—he DIES THE DEATH. Those doctrines, therefore, *must* be the basis of all *Christian* communion; and maintaining those doctrines pure and entire, "holding the HEAD," Christ Jesus, as saith his apostle, his followers may and should have open fellowship with each other, on the ground of their common faith; and ought not to refuse each other on the ground of their inferiour differences.

Should it be asked, how shall I distinguish an essential from a subordinate doctrine of the gospel? The answer has been chiefly anticipated. You are not under the necessity of nice and subtle discriminations; and can certainly distinguish with sufficient accuracy for every practical purpose. You are in no danger of mistaking a man's arm for his finger–his head for his foot; nor of supposing that they are equally important to his life.

You cannot imagine, for one moment, that the question, "whether Christ by his death purchased *temporal* benefits or not for all mankind?" is like the question "whether or not he bought his people unto God by his blood, in making a true, proper, meritorious sacrifice for their sin, when 'through the ETERNAL SPIRIT he offered up himself?'" Nor that the dispute, "whether the covenant of Redemption be different from the covenant of Grace?" or what are so called, be in reality but one and the same covenant viewed under different aspects? is to be classed with the dispute "whether JESUS, *the Lord our righteousness*, is a mere man like ourselves, or the 'true God,' and, therefore, 'eternal life?'"—In deciding on the relative importance of such points there is no room for hesitation. Whatever degree of mistake may be reconciled with union to Christ, and an interest in his salvation, it is not, it cannot be a matter of doubt among those who have tasted his grace, that blaspheming his divinity–rejecting his propitiatory sacrifice; and the justification of a sinner by faith *only*, in his mediatorial merits—denying the personality, divinity, renewing and sanctifying virtue of his holy Spirit, and similar heresies; invalidate every claim to the character of his disciples. They who disown or explain away such truths as these, pretend what they may, are no more servants of Christ, nor partakers of his benefits, than Jews, Mahometans,* or Pagans.

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* There is a very curious, though almost forgotten paper, in which the *Unitarians*, as they call themselves, in opposition to those who hold the doctrine of the ever-blessed *Trinity*, expressly claim kindred with the Mahometans. It is an address from two English Socinians or Arians, (it matters little which) "in their own names, and in that of a multitude of their persuasion," whom they style "a wise and religious sort of people," to the *Morocco* embassador at the court of CHARLES the II. and is entitled, "*An Epistle Dedicatory, to his illustrious* EXCELLENCY, AMETH BEN AMETH, *embassador of the mighty Emperor of* FEZ *and* MOROCCO, *to* CHARLES II. *King of Great Britain.*"

In this "epistle dedicatory," they tell his Mahometan Excellency that the faith of his countrymen and sect is much purer in the article "touching the belief of an only sovereign God," and "many other wholesome doctrines," than the faith of either Papal or Protestant Christendom: seeing that about these doctrines in which they, the Mahometans, "persevere," "this, our western part of the world," the British isles and European continent, "are declined into several errours from the integrity of their predecessors." And they "heartily salute and congratulate his Excellency and all who were with him, as *votaries and* FELLOW-*worshippers* of that sole Supreme Deity of the Almighty Father and Creator." Observe, they are *not* "fellow-worshippers" with *Christians* in this matter (God be praised!) but with *Mahometans*—And they "greatly rejoice and thank his Divine bounty that hath preserved the Emperour of Morocco and his people," being *Mahometans*, "in the excellent knowledge of that truth," already mentioned, which the Christian world, it seems, had lost; and they assure his Excellency, which is a certain verity, that "in those important points," viz. the *Unitarian* doctrines concerning God, they "draw nigher to the *Mahometans*, than all other Protestant or Papal Christians"—And they furthermore state to his Excellency, that they are their, the Mahometans', "*nearest* fellow-champions for those

In the language of one whose scriptural art ry has often battered and shaken the "gat hell," "they neither know him, nor love him

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truths:" and, moreover, "that *God had raised up their Mahomet to the same truth;*" viz. "*the faith of one Supreme God with the* swo *a scourge on those idolizing Christians,*" even as "they, with the *tarian* brethren," had been accustomed to "defend it with their Behold a "defender of the faith," far goodlier than *Henry* the and much dearer to the *Unitarians* than any of his successors, cepting EDWARD the VI, or *William* of Orange! Behold an and avowed alliance; "The SWORD *of* MAHOMET and the UN AN *pen!*" All this and more, in a style of fawning compliment, sect of professed Christians to an embassador of the GREAT TURE : who probably honoured their two representatives, the their backs were turned, with the ordinary loving appellat "*Christian dogs.*"

The whole of this precious "epistle," is prefixed to LESLIE' *cinian controversy discussed.*" Theol. Works, Vol. I. 207. 211.

Such an acknowledged coincidence between *Unitarianism* a *hometanism*, goes far to justify the assertion, that there is no ver difference between *Unitarians* and *Deists*. But we are not left struction or inference on this head. The affinity is distinctly a by no less a personage than the Colossal English Socinian—th Dr. JOSEPH PRIESTLEY. In a letter to his friend, Mr. BEL dated "Northumberland, April 23, 1813," speaking of Mr. JE SON, former President of the United States, the Doctor observe "he," (Mr. Jefferson,) "is generally considered as an *unbelieve* an *infidel*. "*If so*, however, *he cannot be far from* US." Here i and full confession, that infidelity and Socinianism are near neigh or else, a person allowed to be an infidel, would be "far off" fro cinian, which Dr. PRIESTLEY says is not the fact. We say and that they had much better shake hands at once, than keep unmeaning warfare: especially, as WM. WELLS, Esq. of Boston, tleman of talent and a scholar, "whose zeal," to quote Mr. HAM, "whose zeal for truth," i. e. Socinianism, "is beyond all p has told us, in a letter to Mr. B. March 31, 1812, "that Unita believe in him, nor do any wise belong unto him."* With such men there can be neither communion nor compromise. They are to be regarded as enemies of both the cross and the crown of our Lord Jesus Christ—as that spiritual *Amalek* with whom he and his are sworn to have war, only war, and war continually, "from generation to generation." Not that any whom his love "constrains," are to cherish hostile or uncourteous, or untender feeling toward their *persons*; or to think themselves released, in their case, from the obligations of social kindness. God forbid! Neither fidelity to the truth, nor intense affection to the children of truth, involves such a consequence.

"He," to repeat the words of Dr. OWEN, "he who professeth love unto the saints, that peculiar love which is required toward them; and doth not exercise love in general towards all men: much more if he make the pretence of brotherly love the ground of alienating his affection from

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consists rather in *not* believing!!"(*a*) Now if *faith* is so essential to the character of true Christians, that the word of their God denominates them from that very thing, *believers*; then, the Unitarians, themselves being judges, are far enough from being Christians!

* Dr. JOHN OWEN.

(*a*) See for these facts, and certain other curious matter, a pamphlet, just re-published in Boston, entitled *American Unitarianism, or,* "*The progress and present state of the Unitarian churches in America,*" *&c. by the* Rev. Thomas Belsham, *Essex-street,* London.

the rest of mankind, can have no assurance th the love he so professeth is sincere, incorrup genuine, and without dissimulation."* Eve the most determined enemies of the truth ar not to be debarred from this Christian philanthropy. While we hate, oppose, and would utterly destroy their "abominations," we would d good to themselves, as we have opportunity, both for this life, and for that which is to come. Ou "hearts desire and prayer for them is," and ough to be, "that they may be saved"—that JESUS o Nazareth, the "Prince and Saviour" whom, not knowing, they "persecute," would appear unto them in the visions of his word—would "open their blind eyes that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in *his* person and work "may shine into their hearts;" so that obtaining mercy, like the illustrious convert of Tarsus, because they act "ignorantly and in unbelief;" they may, like him, learn to extol the "exceeding abundant grace of our Lord Jesus;" and, like him too, "preach," or promote "the faith" which they are labouring to "destroy." And the church shall "glorify God in them." AMEN!

But while they "remain in their unbelief"—denying in fact, though acknowledging in words, that "JUST and HOLY ONE," there is an immeasurable gulf between them and real Christians. They have no part in our heavenly "David," nor any inheritance in our "son of Jesse." However painful the necessity, it is still necessity which compels us to exclaim, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret! unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!"

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* OWEN on Heb. VI. 9. Expos. Vol. III. 89. Fol.

Such was the judgment and practice of the primitive church. The basis of her communion was laid, as we have already seen, in the substantial doctrines of the gospel, as summed up in her creed. This she required to be adopted and professed by all who offered themselves to her fellowship. It contained, then, her TERMS OF COMMUNION. Consequently, agreement in opinions about which Christians might differ without impugning any of these doctrines, made no part of those terms. In other words, she did not consider such differences as violating her unity. And how numerous they were, no one needs be told who has looked into her history.

Having seen what the primitive church did not view as inconsistent with her visible unity, let us now inquire,

By what, in her judgment, it was liable to be broken. This effect might be produced three ways—

By *schisms* within her bosom ;
By the renunciation of *fundamental* truth ; and
By *withdrawing from her communion.*

1st. Schisms within her bosom, in the *rupture of brotherly harmony*, she always accounted scandalous violations of her unity, even though the bonds of external fellowship were not thereby dissolved. Let the expostulation of CLEMENS ROMANUS with the church of Corinth, be both example and proof. The professing Christians in that city had given early indications of such a disorderly temper, as to call for the authoritative interposition of the apostle Paul. When the fire of contention has once seized upon a community, and been fostered by *personal antipathies*, its extinction is one of the most rare and difficult of human things. It may subside for a while, and even appear to go out ; yet if any new brand of controversy be thrown among the public passions, the smothered flame will be rekindled, will seek its wonted channels, and burst forth and rage with increased violence. The same individuals, or their descendants, will be regularly arrayed against each other. Let there be only a dispute, and a person of sense acquainted with previous facts, shall be able, almost infallibly, to foretell how the parties will be arranged. If two or three conspicuous individuals who formerly acted together, should declare themselves, the die is cast. Their old opponents take the other side *as a matter of course.* Thus social conflicts become hereditary ; and revive under varied shapes, long after the original disagreement is buried and forgotten. Should they, however, be diverted from this their natural direction, and even be happily terminated, they leave in the social body a predisposition to the same evil disease. This was probably the state of the church of Corinth. It had been split up into parties who attached themselves to particular ministers, and were more passionately devoted, as is usual, to the glory of their respective chiefs, than to those great interests in which they were equally concerned. Paul had quelled their foolish tumults: but he is no sooner gone to his crown of righteousness, than they embark in a new strife. A number of those who had quarrelled with each other about their favourite teachers, now turn round, and make common cause against the teachers themselves. Such is the consistency of human passions! Such the stability of popular affection!

We learn the fact from CLEMENS ROMANUS, a contemporary of the Apostles,* and perhaps the next to the Apostles in worth and dignity. We also learn from him, the light in which the litigious spirit of the Corinthians was viewed by thei fellow christians. In his first, which is his genuine, epistle to their church, he thus pathetically remonstrates with them on the subject o their feuds:

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* EUSEB. E. H. Lib. V. c. 6. p. 217.

"Let us cleave to the innocent and the just for these are the elect of God. Why are there strifes, and angry tempers, and dissentions, and schisms, and fightings, among you? Have we not one God, and one Christ, and one Spirit poured out upon us; and one calling in Christ? Why do we rend asunder the members of Christ, and factiously strive against our own body, and proceed to such a height of madness as to forget that we are members one of another? Remember the words of our Lord Jesus: For he said, *Wo to that man! It had been better for him not to have been born than to lay a stumbling-block before one of my elect: it had been better for him to be bound to a mill-stone, and be plunged into the sea, than to stumble one of my little ones.*

"Your schism has perverted many; has thrown many into despondence; many into wavering; all of us into sorrow—and your factions continue!"*

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* Κολληθωμεν ουν τοις αθωοις και δικαιοις· εισιν δε ὁυτοι εκλεκτοι του θεου. Ἱνα τι ερεις, ϗ θυμοι, ϗ διχοστασιαι, ϗ σχισματα, πολεμος τε εν ὑμιν, η ουχι ἑνα θεον εχομεν; ϗ ἑνα Χριστον; ϗ ἑν Πνευμα της χαριτος το εκ-

Again: "Let him who has love in Christ, keep the commandments of Christ. The bond of the love of God, who can set forth? the magnificence of his beauty who is sufficient to express as he ought? The height to which love conducts is beyond all utterance. Love permits no *schism*; love cherishes no *factions*; love does every thing in *harmony*; by love all the elect of God are perfected—without love, nothing is acceptable to God."*

The dissentions against which Clemens, after the example of Paul, so divinely pleads, were *within* the church. With all their strifes and seditions among themselves, there was one bond

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χυθεν εφ᾽ ἡμας; ϗ μια κλησις εν Χριστῳ; ἱνα τι διελκομεν ϗ διασπωμεν τα μελη του Χριστου, ϗ στασιαζομεν προς το σωμα το ιδιον; ϗ εις τοσαυτην απονοιαν ερχομεθα, ὡστε επιλαθεσθαι ἡμας ὁτι μελη εσμεν αλληλων; Μνησθητε των λογων Ιησου του κυριου ἡμων. Ειπε γαρ· Ουαι τῳ ανθρωπῳ εκεινῳ· καλον ην αυτῳ ει ουκ εγεννηθη, η ἑνα των εκλεκτων μου σκανδαλισαι· κρειττον ην αυτῳ περιτεθηναι μυλον, και καταποντισθηναι εις την θαλασσαν, η ἑνα των μικρων μου σκανδαλισαι. Το σχισμα ὑμων πολλους διεστρεψεν, πολλους εις αθυμιαν εβαλεν, πολλους εις δισταγμον, τους παντας ἡμας εις λυπην· ϗ επιμονος ὑμων εστιν ἡ στασις.

Clem. Rom. Ep. I. ad. Cor. c. 46. ap.
P.P. App. Tom. I. p. 174, 5.

* Ὁ εχων αγαπην εν Χριστῳ τηρησατω τα του Χριστου παραγγελματα. Τον δεσμον της αγαπης του Θεου τις δυναται εξηγησασθαι; το μεγαλειον της καλλονης αυτου, τις αρκει, ὡς εδει, ειπειν; το ὑψος εις ὁ αναγει ἡ αγαπη, ανεκδιηγητον εστιν. Αγαπη ΣΧΙΣΜΑ ουκ εχει· αγαπη ου ΣΤΑΣΙΑΖΕΙ. αγαπη παντα ποιει εν ὉΜΟΝΟΙΑι. Εν αγαπῃ ετελειωθησαν παντες οἱ εκλεκτοι του Θεου· διχα αγαπης ουδεν ευαρεστον εστι τῳ Θεῳ.

Id. Ib. c. 48. p. 176.

which they did not venture to break—the bond of their common Christianity. This still preserved their public union with each other, and with the church of God. Yet observe the topics which Clemens urges for the restoration of concord. They are three:

(1.) All schisms; all dividing of Christian from Christian—all things which prevent their free, full, affectionate, evangelical intercourse, are at war with their relations as members of the *one* body of Christ.

(2.) They are incompatible with the reigning power of Christian love.

(3.) They hinder the progress of the gospel; they shake the faith of some; produce apostacy in others; grieve the hearts and weaken the hands of unwavering believers, and expose their authours and abettors to the severest comminations of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If the many and woful contentions now in the church of Christ, affect not her children in the same manner, their indifference arises, and can arise, from no other cause than their having "left their first love."

Let this suffice for the first point.

2d. The primitive church considered the *renunciation of fundamental truth* as inconsistent with her unity.

This flowed, and must forever flow, as a necessary consequence from the very principle of her being, viz. her FAITH. She is *built upon the foundation of the* APOSTLES *and* PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST *himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.*[*]

The apostles and prophets, i. e. their inspired doctrines, contain God's TESTIMONY concerning that *eternal life which he hath* GIVEN *to us in his* SON;[†] *which divine* TESTIMONY is addressed to, and embraced by, the FAITH of his church.[‡] And as the sole foundation of faith, in every possible form and degree, is testimony; so, whatever rests upon testimony, must have faith as its essential principle. Therefore, the church of God, founded upon pure revelation, i. e. upon his own testimony in his written word, exists by faith, and by faith alone. As this is not the time to "stop the mouths" of those "vain talkers," who charge the doctrine which so highly exalts the *faith* of the church, with depressing, in the same proportion, her love and practice of moral virtue; they shall be dismissed with a single remark—Should a man, on the search for "true holiness," go in quest of it among the *unbelievers*, the world itself would account him vastly simple!

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[*] EPH. ii. 20, 21.
[†] 1 JOHN. v. 11.
[‡] The BIBLE, from beginning to end.

To return. Try the common sense of mankind on this point. Ask them what they would think of an *unbelieving church of God?* The idea is shocking. Our understandings revolt from its absurdity; our hearts from its impiety. No ingenuity has ever been able to justify, or even to palliate, before the bar of plain dealing, subscription to creeds which the subscriber does not sincerely believe, upon the pretence of their being "articles of peace;" or of their admitting a construction which is not their obvious, unlaboured, natural meaning. This is jugglery all over. The two-faced oracle of DELPHOS in the sanctuary of God. It belongs to those deep dissimulations,

> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promise to our ear,
> And break it to our hope.*

The agreement thus apparently effected between belief and unbelief; between faith and no faith—the oil and water in Christian doctrine; was well defined by one who "smacked" but little of orthodoxy, to be, "not the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; but the union of knaves in the bond of hypocrisy."

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* Shakspeare.

In such arts the early church was no adept. That same SPIRIT OF GOD who taught her the most extended charity towards those who, with all their differences, were one in "the *faith* of our Lord Jesus Christ," taught her also to contend *earnestly* for that faith; and not to receive into her bosom, and nurture as her children, any by whom it should be corrupted. "*If there come any unto you*," says John, "*and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him 'God speed,' is partaker of his evil deeds.*"* To that conspiracy against truth, which, under the guise of charity, welcomes or endures all sorts of doctrines, and those the most contradictory, even concerning the person and work of "God our Saviour," both the beloved disciple and the church of his master, were utter strangers. To deny any capital article of her faith, was, in her view, to mar her symmetry, to destroy her unity, to tear up her very foundations. Hence her public creeds, which she required to be embraced by every candidate for baptism—hence her stress upon her ONE faith throughout the whole world—and her abhorrence of heresy and heretics. Hence the work of IRENÆUS against the doctrinal heresies which had troubled her peace until his day. Irenæus was for some time a contemporary of Polycarp, having seen him, as he says himself, in the early part of his life. This zealous vindicator of the one faith of the church, tells us upon Polycarp's authority, as the story was related by those who had it from Polycarp's own lips, that the apostle John, having gone into a bath at *Ephesus*, and observed Cerinthus,* sprang out immediately, exclaiming, "*Let us fly, lest the bath should fall*—Cerinthus, *the enemy of the truth, is there!*" And Polycarp himself having fallen in with

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* 2 John 10, 11

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* Cerinthus, of the Gnostic sect, the earliest corrupters of Christianity after the Judaizing teachers, was in some respects the prototype of the modern Unitarians. Among other fundamental errours, he denied the *proper divinity of Christ*, whom he considered as the most glorious of the *æons*, a set of created beings—a notion from which the *Arians* are not very remote. He denied also, that Jesus was born of a virgin, which he held to be impossible; and maintained, that he was the son of Joseph and Mary, in the ordinary course of nature—a leading doctrine of the Socinians of the present day; and openly avowed, in a note to Mat. i. 18, in what is called an *improved version of the New Testament*, printed at London in 1808, and reprinted at Boston in 1809. Cerinthus, however, taught, that this Christ, this unintelligible *æon*, descended on the man Jesus at his baptism, and flew away from him at his crucifixion.(*a*) We do not know that any of his disciples, who dream after him in other respects, have dreamed this dream also. But it was needless to stop; while they were about it, they might as well have dreamed the whole.

(*a*) *Iren.* adver. hæreses, Lib. I. c. 25.

Marcion,* who begged to be recognised by him as a brother, "*I recognise thee*," cried Polycarp, "*as the first born of Satan!*" "So religiously," adds Irenæus, "did the Apostles and their disciples shun all intercourse, even in conversation, with any of those who adulterated the truth."† These traits of primitive character bear as little resemblance to the "charity" of the present age, as that charity bears to real love to men or loyalty to God. Cyprian is very explicit. "The enemy," says he, "exposed and prostrated by the coming of Christ—contrived a new fraud that he might deceive the thoughtless under the very sanction of the Christian name. He invented heresies and schisms, that he might subvert the faith, corrupt the truth, and rend unity."* One of the ways, then, of rending the unity of the church, was the subversion of her *faith*; which is the effect of fundamental errour, and the design of that father of lies from whom it proceeds.

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* Marcion of Pontus, uttered horrible blasphemies, maintaining, among other things, that "the God of Abraham and the prophets is not the father of our Lord Jesus Christ; but a different being, the *authour of evil*, a delighter in wars, mutable and self-contradictory."

Iren. adv. 1 hær. Lib. I. c. 19, 20.

The expression addressed by this heretic to Polycarp, viz. Επιγινωσκε ἡμας, i. e. "Recognise us," was somewhat technical in the primitive church; and equivalent with a *brotherly salutation*. The deacons were accustomed to use it at the celebration of the supper, frequently calling out to the communicants as they came up, Επιγινωσκετε αλληλους, "*Recognise each other!*" viz. lest a Jew or profane person might approach the holy table. A custom which throws light upon, and may have been borrowed from, Paul's expression. 1 Cor. xvi. 18. Επιγινωσκετε τους τοιουτους, "*Acknowledge* them that are such."—

H. Valesii, Annot. ad. Euseb. H. E. T. I. 161.

† Εισιν οἱ ακηκοοτες αυτου (Polycarp) ὁτι Ιωαννης ὁ του Κυριου μαθητης εν τῃ Εφεσῳ πορευθεις λουσασθαι, ϗ ιδων εσω Κηρινθον, εξηλατο του βαλανειου μη λουσαμενος, αλλ᾽ επειπων, "Φυγωμεν, μη ϗ το βαλανειον συμπεσῃ, ενδον οντος Κηρινθου του της αληθειας εχθρου." Και αυτος ὁ Πολυκαρπος, Μαρκιωνι ποτε εις οψιν αυτῳ ελθοντι ϗ φησαντι, "Επιγινωσκε ἡμας," απεκριθη, "Επιγινωσκω τον πρωτοτοκον του Σατανα." Τοσαυτην οἱ Αποστολοι ϗ οἱ μαθηται αυτων εσχον ευλαβειαν, προς το μηδε μεχρι λογου κοινωνειν τινι των παραχαρασσοντων την αληθειαν.

Iren. ap, Euseb. Lib. IV. c. 14. p. 161.

It is superfluous to multiply quotations. The very term HERESY, which simply signifies DIVISION, was early appropriated to *false doctrine*, for this very reason, that the bond of the church's unity is *faith in the* TRUTH ; which bond nothing more effectually unties than the propagation of *doctrinal* FALSEHOOD.

3d. The unity of the primitive church was broken by *withdrawing from her communion*; or which was, in her eyes, the same thing, the setting up of *separate and restricted communions*.

If custom, which reconciles men to both absurdity and sin, had not familiarized the spectacle of evangelical churches alienated from, and often arrayed against, each other—my soul shudders—*in the* NAME OF THE LORD JESUS!! it would be inconceivable how the idea of ONE catholic CHURCH can be dissevered from that of ONE catholic COMMUNION. That union should not be a basis for communion—that "particular churches, which are members of the catholic church,"* as parts of one whole, should, in their church-capacity, have no fellowship with each other, though they constitute but one body—nay, that such fellowship should be unwholesome, unholy, unlawful; although as parts of one whole, they have the very same means of life, health, vigour—is so desperate an assault upon the sense of consistency—such a Leviathan of a paradox, that the faculties of poor human nature sink beneath it.

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* Quid vero astutius, quidve subtilius, quam ut Christi adventu detectus ac prostratus INIMICUS——excogitaverit novam fraudem, ut sub ipso Christiani nominis titulo fallat incautos? Hæreses invenit et schismata quibus subverteret fidem, veritatem corrumperet, scinderet unitatem.

De Unit. Eccles. Opp. p. 105.

None of the ancients blundered in this style. Orthodox or heterodox, they agreed in one point, viz. that *different communions exclude the idea of unity.* Hence, on the one hand, the *Novatians, Luciferians, Donatists,* who set up restrictive communions, acted upon the avowed principle that the Catholic church, from which they withdrew, had ceased to be the church of Christ.

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* *Con. of Faith.* ch. xxv. 4.

And, on the other hand, they who condemned the separatists, held, that by the very fact of their separate communion, they threw themselves out of the church of God, and ceased to be a part of her. The ground, then, upon which they both stood, is this, that two churches refusing communion with each other, do thereby renounce their relation to each other as parts of a common whole: and that it is idle to pretend that the public unity of the church can be made to consist with such divisions.

To give at full length the proofs of what is here advanced, would be to transcribe a large portion of the works of some of the early fathers. It is assumed, as incontrovertible, by both CYPRIAN and AUGUSTINE, in their respective controversies with the *Novatians* and *Donatists;* and frequently asserted in the most formal and unqualified manner. A specimen shall suffice.

After showing from the scriptures the visible unity of the church, CYPRIAN thus demands:

" Does he who maintains not this unity, imagine that he possesses the faith? Does he who sets himself *against* the church, cherish a confidence of his being *in* the church?"—Again: " Whoever is disjoined from the church, is joined to an adulteress; is separated from the promises made to the church. Nor can that man attain to the rewards of Christ, who leaves the church of Christ. He is an alien, he is profane, he is an enemy."* Once more. "Let no one, brethren, cause you to err from the ways of the Lord. Let no one tear you, Christians, from the gospel of Christ. Let no one remove from the church, the church's sons. Let them, who are willing to perish, perish by themselves. Let them who have departed from the church, remain without the church, alone."†

These things are spoken of the *Novatians*, who were not accused of unsound doctrine; who carried their ecclesiastical discipline to an excessive rigour; and who, from displeasure at what they accounted the laxness of the church, in dealing with the "lapsed," withdrew from her fellowship, and formed a church and communion of their own. It was the fact of this separation, though under the plea of cultivating and preserving a higher degree of purity, which constituted their offence, and drew upon them the general indignation of the church of God.

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* Hanc Ecclesiæ unitatem qui non tenet, tenere se fidem credit? Qui Ecclesiæ renititur et resistit, in Ecclesiâ se esse confidit? * * * Quisquis ab Ecclesiâ segregatus adulteræ jungitur; a promissis Ecclesiæ separatur. Nec pervenit ad Christi præmia qui relinquit Ecclesiam Christi. Alienus est, profanus est, hostis est.

Cyp. *de Unitate Eccles.* p. 108, 109.

† Nemo vos, fratres, errare a Domini viis faciat. Nemo vos Christianos ab evangelio Christi rapiat. Nemo filios Ecclesiæ de Ecclesia tollat. Pereant sibi soli, qui perire voluerunt. Extra Ecclesiam soli remaneant, qui de Ecclesia recesserunt.

Id. Ep. XLIII. p. 84.

In a similar way AUGUSTINE speaks of the *Donatists* and their schism.

"They who imagine that their own denomination is now clean wheat, have flown away from the *mixture* of chaff and wheat, as if they were pure chaff: and they who think that they no longer feed with the goats under one shepherd, are severed, by the stratagems of wolves, from the Lord's flock: and they who suppose that they are not gathered together with the bad fish, are not only bad fish themselves, but have broken the nets of unity."*

JEROME also, on Eph. 4, 3. observes "This place bears particularly hard upon the heretics, who break the *bond of peace*, yet think that they maintain the '*unity of the Spirit*:' whereas the unity of the Spirit is preserved by the bond of peace. For when, instead of concord in our professions, we cry out, *I am of Paul—I of Apollos—I of Cephas*, we divide the unity of the Spirit, and rend it into shreds."* That the venerable father meant his censure should attach, with peculiar force, to those who had receded from the Catholic fellowship of the church, and set up for themselves, is clear, not only from the nature of his argument, but also from his sentiments formerly quoted.

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* Qui congregationem suam jam frumentum purgatum putant commixtione frumenti et paleæ tanquam pura palea volaverunt: e qui se sub uno pastore non adhuc cum hædis pascere sentiunt luporum insidiis de grege Domini separati sunt: et qui cum malis piscibus se congregatos esse non putant, non solum mali pisces sunt, sed etiam unitatis retia diruperunt.

AUG. *cont. Parm.* Lib. III. c. 3. T. vii. 65.

Innumerable testimonies of the same sort are at hand, but shall not be brought forward: as the preceding fully establish, we believe, the position advanced in the beginning of this section, viz. that the primitive church accounted her unity to be violated, by *internal schisms*—by the *renunciation of fundamental truth*—and by *separate communions*.

There remains yet a

Third Inquiry. *By what means was the visible unity of the primitive church preserved and proclaimed?*

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* Hic locus vel maxime adversum hæreticos facit: qui, pacis vinculo dissipato atque corrupto, putant se tenere spiritus unitatem; cum unitas spiritus in pacis vinculo conservetur. Quando enim non id ipsum omnes loquimur; et alius dicit, *Ego sum Pauli—Ego Apollo—Ego Cephæ*, dividimus spiritus unitatem; et eam in partes ac membra discerpimus.

Hier. *Comment. ad. Eph.* IV. 3. Opp. T. VI. 176.

The answer to this question flows so naturally from the foregoing discussion, that it might, perhaps, be left to the reader's own inference. But, to prevent uncertainty or mistakes, it shall be given distinctly.

Her unity, then, was preserved and evinced, chiefly,

1st. By an inflexible adherence to the great truths of the gospel, as summed up in her creed. Here was her ONE faith, with which she permitted no tampering. This faith her members, all the world over, were expected and required, not merely to abstain from denying, which is at best a negative assurance, but also to embrace and profess. On this point enough has been said already.

2d. By her members' conformity to the customs and usages of any particular church which they might happen to visit.

No local or national peculiarities were allowed to usurp the rank of terms of communion. No small fastidiousness about matters which affected not the *substance* of the Christian profession, to disturb the Christian peace. Whoever, from ignorance, vanity, moroseness, or any other of those deceits which clothe a factious temper in the habiliments of holy zeal, and impute to religious prudery the virtues of a tender conscience, made a noise about things indifferent, and chose to be in dudgeon because he could not fashion the world after his own image, was considered as "ministering questions, rather than godly edifying;" as being more a scandal than an ornament to the gospel. This point also has been sufficiently handled above.

3d. By respecting and supporting *discipline* wheresoever and by whomsoever, within her pale, inflicted.

A person censured by one church was, of course, excluded from every other. No petitions, penitence, complaint, or other expedient, could avail for his admission without reconciliation to the church by which he had been censured. It was inconceivable to these Christian "elders," how a sentence of one court of Christ's kingdom should not be held valid and sacred by every other. To own a church as a member of the church catholic, and yet to disregard, or revise her acts of discipline, is an inconsistency into which they were cautious of falling. It was, in their eyes, equivalent to rejecting her ministry and ordinances. So that whatever subordinate differences might subsist between them, while they acknowledged each other as true churches, they never thought of interfering with each other's judicial acts; or of releasing from censure each other's offenders. Thus they reciprocated confidence, and imparted mutual strength, declared their social union, and drew, by their combined efforts, a line of defence round the "city of God." So thoroughly was this maxim understood, and so generally applied, that "when Pope Zosimus and Celestine took upon them to receive appellants from the African churches, and absolve those whom they had condemned, St. Austin and all the African churches sharply remonstrated against this as an irregular practice, violating the laws of unity, and the settled rules of ecclesiastical commerce, which required, *That no delinquent, excommunicated in one church, should be absolved in another, without giving satisfaction to his own church that censured him.*"*

4th. By holding ministerial and Christian communion with all true churches, as opportunity offered. That is to say, every church received into communion as fully as her own immediate members, ministers and private Christians, from any and every other church under the whole heaven, upon evidence of their good standing: which evidence, when they were not otherwise sufficiently known, was furnished by letters of recommendation, or what we call testimonials or certificates, from their respective churches. And, on the other hand, ministers and private Christians deemed it their duty, and made it their practice, to join in communion with whatever church they might happen to visit in any part of the world.

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* Bingham, B. XVI. Sec. 14. Vol. II. p. 20. Fol. with the authorities there cited.

A strong example of this communion was quoted before, in the case of POLYCARP of *Smyrna*, and ANICETUS of *Rome*; and that at a time when there existed warm disputes between the Asiatic and European churches.* The strain of the whole narrative in EUSEBIUS, shows that this was not an exception to, but an instance of, the ascertained and undisputed rule of church-fellowship. As, indeed, a very simple consideration fully proves. For the very intention of POLYCARP's journey to Rome was, to *prevent the communion of the Catholic church being broken by subordinate differences:* and he succeeded; so that the peace of the whole church was preserved. In token whereof, he not only communicated with the church of Rome, but, at the request of ANICETUS, dispensed the Lord's supper: one of the highest acts of ministerial communion.

The whole correspondence between the *African* and *Roman* churches, as contained in the letters to and from CYPRIAN, is conducted upon the same principle. Of this any one will be satisfied, who shall take the trouble to peruse them. He will perceive, that the proof of this assertion lies rather in their general cast and spirit, and in their *obviously supposing the fact*, than in particular expressions. A proof of all others the most decisive with those who know how to estimate proof. A particular witness may err or deceive: but public transactions between social bodies, such as organized churches, bearing upon their face the most intimate and confidential co-operation with regard to their most sacred internal concerns, and those as forming one common interest, preclude mistake and doubts, as to the fact of their social communion. Such is the character of the transactions mentioned in the correspondence of CYPRIAN. It cannot, therefore, be produced at length here, because that would require the transcription of a volume. But for the sake of those to whom a *case* is more satisfactory than a *principle*, I subjoin an extract from CYPRIAN's thirty-second epistle, written to the Presbyters and Deacons of *Carthage* during his exile.

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* EUS. E. H. L. V. 24.

Speaking of the letters which he had addressed to the clergy at Rome, and of their answers, he says, "Be as careful as possible, that what both

I and they have written, be made known to the brethren. And, moreover, if there should be present with you, or should happen to arrive, any *foreign Bishops*, *my colleagues*, or Presbyters, or Deacons, let them hear the whole. And should they wish copies of these letters to carry back to their connexions, aid them in the transcription: although I have charged our brother SATURUS, the Reader, to let all who may desire it have an opportunity of transcribing them, that somehow or other adjusting, in the interim, the state of the churches, one harmonious plan may be pursued by all."*

Two things appear to be settled by this letter:

(1.) CYPRIAN would hardly dignify with the appellation of his "colleagues," or invite to co-operation with himself in the affairs of his *own church*, ministers with whom he did not, or would not, *hold communion*.

(2.) As these ministers, to whom his correspondence with the Roman ministry was to be imparted, belonged neither to the African nor Roman church, but were "foreigners," (*peregrinis*) it is clear, that the most intimate ministerial communications was maintained with churches of different nations and distant places.

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* Vos curate quantum potestis pro diligentiâ vestrâ, ut scripta nostra, et illorum rescripta fratribus nostris innotescant. Sed et si qui de peregrinis Episcopi Collegæ mei, vel Presbyteri, vel Diacones præsentes fuerint, vel supervenerint, hæc omnia de vobis audiant; et si exempla epistolarum transcribere, et ad suos perferre voluerint, facultatem transcriptionis accipiant. Quamvis et Saturo Lectori fratri nostro mandaverim, ut singulis desiderantibus describendi faciat potestatem, ut in Ecclesiarum statu quoquomodo interim componendo servetur omnibus una et fida consensio.

CYP. ep. 32. ed. FELL. p. 65.

Observations like those upon CYPRIAN's general correspondence, are applicable to the letters of ATHANASIUS, written at various times to various individuals, orders, and churches. But, for brevity's sake here also, one example shall suffice:

"There frequently comes to the city, a man well qualified to preach in Greek. Whoever study the gratification of their ears, hasten to church, not to get healing to their souls, but merely to catch the beauty of the composition.* The eloquent speaker goes away; these tares also go from the church, for they have nothing of the wheat, nothing of faith. But the believer, however elegantly the preacher speaks, makes it his business to attend to what is said, whether it be in the *Syrian*, *Roman*, or any *other* tongue.

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* That evil disease, the religious itch, which impoverishes the soul to tickle the ear, is not only of long standing, but of inveterate malignity. None languish more pitiably under its venom than those who wish to be thought *elegant* Christians. Let them pause—they are likely to pay dear for a worthless gratification; as "itching ears" naturally "turn away from the TRUTH, and are turned unto FABLES."

For he regards the *matter*, not the *words*."* *Alexandria*, the city to which ATHANASIUS alludes, was the metropolis of what is known in history as the *Egyptian Diocese*.†

From this extract, it is clear, that the churches of Egypt, Syria, Italy, Greece, and indeed of the whole world, held Christian and ministerial communion with each other, as a *matter of course*, when opportunities occurred.

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* Παραγινεται πολλακις εις πολιν ανηρ δυναμενος διδασκειν Ελληνιστι. Ὁ την ακοην θελγομενος σπευδει εις την εκκλησιαν, ου την ιατρειαν της ψυχης, αλλα των λογων το καλλος μονον ἁρπασαι. Ανεχωρησεν ὁ ευγλωττως λαλων, ανεχωρησε ϗ της εκκλησιας το ζιζανιον· ου γαρ εχει το σιτωδες, το πιστον. Ὁ δε πιστος, καν ευγλωττως (a) λεγῃ, τα λεγομενα σπουδαζει κατακουειν· καν Συριστι, καν Ρωμαιστι, καν διαφορῳ γλωττῃ· ου γαρ ζητει λογόυς, αλλ᾽ εργα.

ATHAN. *Hom. de Semente*, Opp. T. II. 63.
ed. BENEDICT. 1698. Fol.

† *Diœcesis Aegyptiaca.* According to *Bingham*, the Archbishop of Alexandria, (at this time ATHANASIUS himself,) by whom the diocese was governed, had under him not only about one hundred bishops, but it seems also, subordinate Metropolitans or Archbishops; so as "to have the ordering of ecclesiastical matters throughout all "*Egypt*, *Thebais*, *Mareotes*, *Libya*, *Ammoniaca*, *Mareotis*, and *Pentapolis*;" i. e. a district comprehending several large provinces, exceeding together nine hundred miles in length, and five hundred in breadth. Was this too an apostolic ordinance? Was this no *alteration* in the primitive order of the church? Yet we see that it did not break communion.

(a) Vide *Cotelerii* annot. ad Const. Apost. Lib. II. c. 58. T. I. p. 269. This learned editor proposes to amend the text of *Athanasius*, by adding, after ευγλωττως, the words καν αγλοττως, so as to read "whether elegantly or inelegantly." But the addition is unnecessary, if not hurtful, to the sense: the point of which is, that serious Christians are not to be put off with the eloquence of stile or manner. They look for something more and something better. They look for their spiritual food in the "doctrine which is according to Godliness." This will compensate them for the want of fine elocution, but the finest elocution will not compensate for the want of this.

But not to multiply authorities which might be tedious to the reader, and to put this point at once beyond all question, there is, in the compilation called the *Apostolical constitutions*, a chapter with the following title:

"*Concerning letters of recommendation brought by* STRANGERS, *whether of the* LAITY, CLERGY, *or* BISHOPS; *and that there should be no distinction*," viz. between them and the members, whether lay or clerical, of the church to which they come.

The chapter then proceeds:

"If there come from a church abroad brethren or sisters with credentials, let the deacon make the proper inquiry respecting them, whether they profess the faith, belong to the church, and be not contaminated with heresy. And again, if a woman, whether she be married or a widow. And thus having ascertained that they are sound in the faith, and of one accord with the church in the things of the Lord, let him conduct every one to his proper place. Should a presbyter come from abroad, let him be *received into official communion* by the presbyters. If a deacon, by the deacon. If a bishop, let him take his seat with the bishop, being accounted by him as worthy of equal honour. And thou shalt request him, O bishop, to *address the people in the word of doctrine.* For exhortation and admonition by *strangers* is *acceptable*, and in *the highest degree useful.* For no prophet, saith Christ, is accepted in his own country. Thou shalt also employ him to *offer the eucharist:* And should he, out of respect to thee, with a view, like a wise man, to maintain thy honour, decline this service, thou shalt *insist* that he at least *bless the people.*"*

Although these "Constitutions" are not of apostolic authority, as the erratic and fanciful Whiston imagined,† preferring them even above the writings of a *single* apostle ;‡

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* Ει δε τις απο παροικιας αδελφος η αδελφη επελθῃ συςασιν επικομιζομενοι, διακονος επικρινετω τα καθ' αυτους, ανακρινων ει πιςοι, εκκλησιαςικοι, ει μη απο αἱρεσεως εισι μεμολυσμενοι. Και παλιν, ει ὑπανδρος η χηρα· ϗ ὁυτω γνους τα καθ' αυτους, ὡς εισιν αληθως πιςοι ϗ ὁμογνωμονες εν τοις κυριακοις, απαγετω ἑκαςον εις τον προσηκοντα αυτῳ τοπον. Ει δε ϗ πρεσβυτερος απο παροικιας επελθοι, προσδεχεσθω ὑπο των πρεσβυτερων κοινωνικος· ει δε διακονος, ὑπο των διακονων· ει δε επισκοπος, συν τῳ επισκοπῳ καθεζεσθω, της αυτης αξιουμενος ὑπ' αυτου τιμης. Και ερωτησεις αυτον, ω επισκοπε, προσλαλησαι τῳ λαῳ λογους διδακτικους· ἡ γαρ των ξενων παρακλησις ϗ νουθεσια ευπαραδεκτος ϗ ωφελιμωτατη σφοδρα. Ουδεις γαρ προφητης, φησιν, δεκτος εν τῃ ιδιᾳ πατριδι. Επιτρεψεις δ' αυτῳ ϗ την ευχαριςιαν ανοισαι· εαν δε, δι' ευλαβειαν, ὡς σοφος, την τιμην σοι τηρων, μη θελησῃ ανενεγκαι, καν εις τον λαον ευλογιαν αυτον ποιησασθαι καταναγκασεις.

Const. App. Lib. II. c. 58. ap. PP. App. ed. Cotel.
Tom. I. p. 268, 9.

† Whiston's *prim. Christianity revived.* Vol. III. p. 11.

‡ Ib. p. 4.

but the work of some pretender two centuries later, as the learned for the most part agree; yet they clearly show what was the state of the church respecting communion at the time they were composed; and what was the current opinion concerning her uniform practice. Little stress, indeed, is to be laid on that opinion, simply as such; for it was undeniably erroneous in some other things of moment. But as it coincides with the scriptural doctrine of the unity of the church, as well as with facts established by different witnesses, it is entitled to more than ordinary credit in the present argument. The mere fact of this catholic communion, both Christian and ministerial, being so sedulously kept up in the third or fourth century, furnishes an almost demonstrative proof that it was so from the beginning. Human vanity and policy breed discord, not peace; put asunder what God has joined; never join what the Devil has put asunder. So that the *one* communion of the church, being directly contrary to the corruption of man and the interest of hell, could never have existed without the ordinance and operation of God.

It has now been proved, we hope, to the conviction of the reader, that the communion for which these pages plead, viz. the free and full interchange of fellowship in all evangelical ordinances, between believers of every name, on the broad basis of their agreement in the substantial doctrines of the cross, is precisely that communion which was maintained in the primitive church, beginning with the days and the example of the Apostles themselves. The local and party exceptions to this general position are furnished by the *Novatians*, *Donatists* and *Luciferians*, who have already been noticed. The two former brought the principle of catholic communion to a rigorous test: and the discussions respecting their schisms, terminated, as we have seen, in its triumph as a principle of the most sacred obligation. The sect of *Luciferians*, so named from *Lucifer*, bishop of *Cagliari*, in *Sardinia*, was too feeble and ephemeral to attract regard on the general question. The same remark applies to those very partial suspensions of communion which arose most frequently from *personal* considerations; and were rather effusions of passion and spleen, than expressions of opinion deliberately adopted, or authoritative precedents likely to be followed. They were just sufficient to show the strength of the ties which they endeavoured to break; and to establish the doctrine which they might be quoted to discredit. That doctrine, which the present argument aims to revive and recommend; and which the authour is confident no *material* facts can be found to invalidate.

Here, then, we take leave of the *primitive* church. Even in the fourth century many grievous abuses had sprung up, grown rank, and brought forth their poisonous fruit, especially in her worship and government. The policy of CONSTANTINE which secularized her form; his profusion, which corrupted her virtue; and the meretricious attire which banished her modesty, prepared her for rapid infidelities to her LORD, and for her final prostitution to the MAN OF SIN. From the fifth century may be dated that career of shame which, particularly in the Western empire, she ran, with wild incontinence, through the night of the "dark ages;" until she was branded from above as the "MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."*

To carry down the induction of facts during these opprobrious centuries, would be an idle expenditure of time and toil, as its results would be of no value in the eyes of those for whom these pages are penned. Omitting them altogether, we resume our thread at that eventful crisis, when the faithful remnant heard and obeyed the mandate of their God. "*Come out of*

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* Rev. xvii. 5.

her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."*

The reader perceives at once, that we allude to the REFORMATION from POPERY.

All who are conversant with the history of that stupendous revolution, know that it turned mainly on two points, viz. the *faith* and *worship* of the church. The one was to be reclaimed from its manifold perversions; and the other to be disencumbered of a monstrous ritual. By the first, the light of life in the doctrine of the gospel was almost extinguished; and by the second, men were bowed down under a load of superstitions which FRAUD had been accumulating for ages upon the back of IGNORANCE. Both these evils were to be remedied. Truth was to be restored to her purity, and worship to her simplicity. The minds of men were to be liberated from their bondage, and the word of God to reassume its authority. Tradition was to fall under the sword of the commandment; and, "Thus saith the Lord," to dissipate the figments of the elders. The mantle of the Apostles fell upon the Reformers; while the "Spirit of judgment and of burning," both enlightened their path, and devoured the thorns and briars which impeded their march.

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* Rev. xviii. 4.

The interests which they rose to vindicate; the severity of the conflict which they had to sustain; and the long train of consequences which were to flow from their measures, called forth that mighty talent, magnanimous feeling, and elevated principle, which have nothing to throw away upon trifles; but endless treasures of intellect and toil, of suffering and blood, to lavish in the cause of Jesus Christ.

The Protestant churches, therefore, from the Reformation downwards, shall furnish our

Third class of facts.

On the several points enumerated above, viz. defective moral discipline—different rites of worship—different views of external order—and different opinions in subordinate doctrines, there was a marked coincidence between the views of the Reformers and of the primitive Christians; both agreeing that they are not sufficient grounds of disunion among Christians, nor of their excluding each other from the most tender and ample fellowship in the things of God. In the case of the Reformers, this is the more worthy of notice, as a proof of their having imbibed the pure spirit of the gospel; seeing they did not, like the first heralds of the cross, issue from one nation, and one spot, with simultaneous commissions, and after having been educated together for several years by the master himself: but were of different countries, languages, habits, prejudices; many of them absolute strangers to each other, yet all drawing their doctrines out of the one well of salvation—the holy scripture. Their concord, therefore, in matters about which they had no guide but the word of God, can hardly be attributed to another cause than his "sending forth his light and his truth." And they did declare themselves, very abundantly, both in word and deed, upon the subject now before us.

Their adversaries, the Papists, from whose communion they had separated, denied their whole claim to the character of Christian churches. To repel such a charge, it was necessary to determine from the word of God what constitutes the true church; to give its distinctive marks; and to show that they belonged to it themselves. In doing this, they fixed upon such characteristics as are common, even at the present hour, to all the churches of Reformed Christendom, which have not lost the faith of the Trinity and the atonement. These characteristics are generally summed up, in their confessions, under two heads—

1st. The pure doctrine of the gospel.

2d. The right administration of the sacraments.

"The Church," says the Augustan confession, drawn up by Melancthon, in 1530, revised by Luther and other divines, and published as the authentic expression of the Lutheran faith, "The church, properly so called, has her signs, viz. the pure and sound doctrine of the gospel, and the right use of the sacraments; and for the *true unity* of the Church, *it is sufficient to agree in the doctrine of the gospel and the right use of the sacraments.*"* That such was the sense of the Protestant world, is evident from the testimonies referred to in the margin, which are not transcribed, as it would only be a series of tautologies, the very same thing being asserted nearly in the same words.† What is meant by the "pure gospel," and the due administration of the sacraments, must be ascertained from the confessions

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* Habet Ecclesia proprie dicta, signa sua, scilicet, puram et sanam evangelii doctrinam, et rectum usum sacramentorum. Et ad veram unitatem ecclesiæ satis est consentire de doctrina evangelii, et administratione Sacramentorum.

Syntag: *Conf.* p. 2. p. 13. Art. conf. vii.

† See apud *Syntagma confessionum.*

Confess. Argentinens:	A. D. 1530	*Synt. part* 1, p.	239
Bohoemic:	1535	2	248
Wirtemburg:	1551		184
Gallican:	1561	1	107
Anglic:	1562		130
Helvet:	1566		53
Scotic:	1568		150

themselves. That they vary in certain particulars; some being more full, and others more brief; some more, and others less precise; some having what others want; and some even maintaining, in secondary matters, what has not the sanction of the rest, is unquestionable. It would have been a wonder equal to the fable of the seventy-two translators of the Old Testament into Greek,* had no such diversity happened. But nothing can be more clear or consoling than their harmony in all the leading doctrines of the gospel, which are known at this day as THE DOCTRINES OF THE REFORMATION. Around these Christians rallied with one heart and one soul. These were the basis of their union and communion. Nor is there such a thing as a *sectarian* note of the church to be found either among their public instruments of profession, or in any protestant writer of eminence, with whom the authour is acquainted, whether of that or of a subsequent age.

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* The story is, that *Ptolemy Philadelphus*, king of Egypt, about two centuries and a half before Christ, shut up seventy-two learned Jews, who had been sent from Jerusalem to translate the law, in seventy-two different cells, till they had finished their translation: when, *mirabile dictu!* the seventy-two versions agreed *throughout in every tittle, even to the very words!!"* See JUSTIN: MARTYR: *cohort. ad Græcos*, p. 73. ed. Grabe. 8vo. 1703.

Now that they judged their concord in the capital articles of faith to be sufficient for every purpose of Christian unity and fellowship, is plain from their obvious intention, which was, to justify themselves and their principles from the calumnies of their adversaries. The great crime with which they were charged was their renouncing THE church. They were stigmatised as schismatics, heretics, fanatics, apostates, profligates. They replied, that their departure was a matter not of choice, but of necessity; that they had no alternative but to part with popery or with piety; to put their souls in jeopardy, or to withdraw from Rome: and that instead of apostatising from JESUS CHRIST, they were only returning to the ancient faith which Rome had forsaken. They accordingly laid open her abominations to the world; and with their bible in the one hand, and their confession in the other, they proclaimed the truth which is "according to godliness." Certainly, if it was to enjoy this truth, and the worship connected with it, that they broke communion with Rome, their very act declares it to be the ground of communion with each other; for if it were not so, and so viewed, they would have been self-convicted of having lost the church of God in their zeal to reform her, inasmuch as they would not have retained enough to *erect a church-communion.* But if they were not guilty of such folly; if they committed no such ridiculous suicide, as every Protestant will insist; then it follows that the doctrines of their confessions being substantially the same, and excluding, often avowedly, their other differences as not essential, were, in their own eyes, the true and broad foundation of church-communion.

This conclusion grows out of the very structure of their confessions; but they have fortified it by declarations which are of the nature, and almost in the form of a *protest* against disunion, on account of those peculiar features which may distinguish the churches of one country or name from those of another, without infringing upon their common faith. All such peculiarities, whether in government, worship, discipline, manners, or modifications of doctrine, they held to be subjects of brotherly forbearance; and no just cause of dissension, far less of sectarian communion. On the contrary, like the primitive christians, they maintained, that the one church of God, scattered over the whole earth, ought to have but *one* communion. So that whoever is in communion with one part of the Catholick church, is, by this very fact, in communion with every other part, and is so to be acknowledged, received, and cherished.

Lest I should be thought to exaggerate, they shall speak for themselves.

The AUGSBURGH confession, (A. D. 1530,) " condemns the *Donatists* and their like."* Now the *Donatists*, as was shown above, broke off from the Catholick church on pretence of her having bad men in her communion, and even in her ministry. This, say the Lutheran Protestants, was not a sufficient cause: they of course condemn all those churches who refuse communion with others on account of defective moral discipline.

The BELGIC confession, i. e. of Calvinist Protestants in the United Provinces, (1561,) thus lays down their faith respecting the church:

" We believe and confess one catholick or universal church; which is the true congregation or assembly of all faithful Christians who expect their whole salvation from Christ Jesus alone; as they are washed in his blood, and sanctified and sealed by his Spirit. This holy church is limited to no particular place or person, but is spread over the whole earth; yet, through the power of faith, is joined and united, all of it, by affection and will, in one and the same spirit.

" We believe, that since this sacred assembly and congregation consists of those who shall be saved, and there is no salvation out of it, no person, of whatever rank or dignity, may withdraw himself therefrom, so as to *live separately contented with his own custom only.* But on the contrary, that all are bound to join themselves to this assembly, and *carefully to preserve the unity of the church,* and freely to submit themselves to her doctrine and discipline, bowing their neck to the yoke of Christ; and as members in common of the same body, to lay themselves out for the edification of their brethren, as God has bestowed his gifts upon them respectively. Moreover, that these things may be the better observed, it is the duty of all believers to disjoin themselves from those who are without the church, and to *join themselves to this assembly and congregation of the faithful, wherever God has formed it.* Whoever, therefore, shall forsake that true church, or *shall refuse to connect themselves with it,*" (in whatever part of the world it be,) " *do openly resist the commandment of God.*

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* Art. viii.

" We believe that the utmost diligence and prudence are to be used in determining, according to the word of God, which is that true church, since all the sects upon earth lay claim to the same title. We do not now speak of hypocrites who are mingled with good men in the church, although they do not properly belong to her, but of distinguishing the body and congregation of the true church from all other sects which falsely boast of being members thereof.

"By the following marks, therefore, shall the true church be distinguished from the false. If there flourish there the *pure preaching of the gospel, and the legitimate administration of the sacraments according to the command of Christ.* If, moreover, *right discipline be applied for the coercion of vice* ; if, in fine, to sum up all in one word, *she reduce every thing to the rule of God's word, reject all things contrary thereunto, and acknowledge Christ to be her only head.* By these marks, we say, may be known the true church, from which it is not lawful for any one to separate himself."*

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* Credimus et confitemur unicam Ecclesiam Catholicam, seu universalem. Quæ est vera congregatio seu cœtus omnium fidelium Christianorum, qui totam suam salutem ab uno Jesu Christo expectant quatenus videlicet ipsius sanguine sunt abluti, et per Spiritum ejus sanctificati atque obsignati. Hæc porro Ecclesia ut ab initio mundi fuit, ita et usque ad ejus finem est perduratura. Id vel ex eo apparet, quod Christus rex æternus est, qui nunquam sine subditis esse potest. Cæterum hanc Ecclesiam deus contra omnem mundi furorem et impetum tuetur; quamvis ad aliquod tempus parva admodum et quasi extincta in conspectu hominum appareat; quemadmodum tempore illo periculosissimo Achabi Deus sibi septem millia virorum reservasse dicitur, qui non flexerant genu coram Baal. Denique hæc Ecclesia sancta nullo est aut certo loco sita et circumscripta, aut ullis certis ac singularibus personis astricta aut alligata. Sed per omnem orbem terrarum

Some of these expressions are very strong: and, to one not acquainted with the circumstances under which they were used, may look as if they required *spotless perfection* in a true church; or absolute agreement in all views of scriptural institutions. But the reader must not permit himself to be carried away by such a mistake; nothing could be further from the intention of this "good confession." Its object is to show the Protestant church to be a true church in opposition to the church of Rome; as is manifest from the sequel of this very article, where the false church is described as "always attributing more to herself, her institutions, and traditions, than to

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sparsa atque diffusa, quamvis animo ac voluntate in uno eodemque spiritu, virtute fidei, tota sit simul conjuncta atque unita.

Credimus summa sum diligentia, tum prudentia, ex Dei verbo esse inquirendum ac discernendum quænam sit illa vera Ecclesia: quandoquidem omnes sectæ quotquot hodie in mundo vigent Ecclesiæ titulum nomenque usurpant atque prætexunt. Nequaquam verò de hypocritarum cœtu nunc loquimur, qui bonis in Ecclesia sunt permisti, licet ad Ecclesiam proprie non pertineant, in qua corpore sunt præsentes; sed de distinguendo duntaxat veræ Ecclesiæ corpore ac congregatione, ab aliis omnibus sectis quæ se Ecclesiæ membra esse falso gloriantur. His igitur notis vera Ecclesia falsâ discernetur. Si in illa pura Evangelii prædicatio legitimaque Sacramentorum ex Christi præscripto administratio vigeat; si item recta disciplina Ecclesiastica utatur ad coërcenda vitia; si denique, (ut uno verbo cuncta complectamur,) ad normam verbi Dei omnia exigat, et quæcunque huic adversantur, repudiet: Christumque unicum caput agnoscat. His, inquam, notis certum est veram Ecclesiam dignosci posse; a qua fas non sit quenquam disjungi.

the word of God—as not subjecting herself to the yoke of Christ—as not administering the sacraments according to his prescription; but one while adding to them, and another diminishing from them—as always relying more upon men than upon Christ; and as persecuting those who aim at holy conformity to his law, and who arraign her avarice, idolatry, and other vices."*

Such phrases, therefore, as "the *pure* preaching of the gospel"—"the administration of the sacraments *according to the command of Christ*"—"the *right* use of discipline"—"the reducing *every thing to the rule of God's word*"—"the rejection of all things contrary thereto," must be interpreted not so much of the *actual attainment of scriptural perfection* by any churches whatever, as of their avowed *standard;* the *test* to which they submit their pretensions; and of their *substantial* character, whatever, in other respects, might be their failings or differences. That this is the true meaning, the following considerations make evident:

(1.) The Belgic churches themselves had not then, and have not since, arrived at such purity as their own confession, according to certain expressions separately taken, seems to require. And they surely did not intend to say that they had not themselves true churches, and were unworthy of communion with others.

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* Belgic: Confess. art. 29. apud *Synt. Conf.* part I. p. 179.

(2.) The churches adopting this confession, *approved* the confession of the Swiss churches, commonly called the *Helvetic* confession, which, as we shall presently see, disclaims the idea of withdrawing from communion with the churches of Germany, France, England, and other Christian nations.* Their own act, therefore, proclaims their communion with these foreign churches, and no construction may be put upon their words which shall contradict their own practical commentary.

(3.) This same Belgic confession was unanimously approved by the continental divines at the synod of Dordt, A.D. 1619; as "containing no doctrine adverse to the declarations of holy scripture; but, on the contrary, as agreeing with the truth. and with the confessions of the other reformed churches."† It cannot, then, be fairly understood in a sense hostile to those confessions; if we allow the delegates from almost all Protestant Christendom to have known any thing of the faith of their respective churches: and among these churches there was then, as there is now, great diversity in many things.

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* Syntag. Confess. part I. p. 4.

† Acta Synod. Dordrechtanæ, *Sess.* cxlvi. p. 301. *Dord.* 1620.

The Belgic confession, therefore, waving all minor differences between Christians, and bent on supporting the great things of their common faith, contends for the church's unity on this consecrated ground; and insists that it is the duty of every one who loves the LORD JESUS, to hold communion with her through the medium of any one of her branches to which he may have access in any part of the world. If there be but a *true* church, that is enough to *justify* his participation of her ordinances; and if she be the *only* true church there, to render such participation his *bounden duty.* Thus the Belgic confession, and, of course, all who approved it.

As for rites, ceremonies, modifications of external order, &c. which form the chief differences among churches who hold the main doctrines of faith, those same Christian heroes, of whom thousands and ten thousands were enrolled in "the noble army of martyrs," speak in the following manner:

AUGUSTAN confession. "If doctrine and faith be pure, no one, on account of dissimilitude in human traditions, is to be deemed a heretick, or a deserter of the Catholick church. For the unity of the Catholick church consists in the *harmony* *of doctrine and faith, not in human traditions, whereof there has always been in the churches throughout the whole world a great diversity.**"

The BOHŒMIC confession. "Although the external face and form of our churches be now peculiar, yet this is done for no other reason than greater convenience in teaching the word, administering the sacraments, and terminating disputes among brethren who may consult us. As also for the exercise of discipline, by excommunicating those whose conduct merits correction, and who, though infamous for their open enormities, refuse to repent; and by re-admitting them, upon repentance, to the fellowship of the church, and the sacrament of the Eucharist. We are not, therefore, separated from the Catholick church, seeing we enjoy all those things which properly appertain to her.

"As to the differences which may obtain among the churches in external rites or ceremonies, we think it of no importance; for these greatly vary among Christians according to variety of place and nation. Ceremonies change; but faith, Christ, the word, change not. Therefore, a variety of ceremonies, if they be not repugnant to the word of God, neither does harm to Christianity, nor separates from the church. For true religion or Christian piety does not consist in external rites or ceremonies, but in spiritual benefits: in righteousness, faith, joy, peace, and true worship, there being first laid, (as saith Paul) the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom, whatever building be compacted, it groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."* See

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* In externis traditionibus abusus quidam mutati sunt; quarum etiam si qua est dissimilitudo, si tamen doctrina, et fides pura sit, nemo propter illam traditionum humanarum dissimilitudinem habendus est hæreticus, aut desertor Catholicæ Ecclesiæ. Nam unitas Catholicæ Ecclesiæ consistit in doctrinæ et fidei consensu; non in traditionibus humanis, quarum semper in Ecclesiis per totum orbem magna fuit dissimilitudo.

AUGUST. CONF. Art. XXI.

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* Quanquam autem nunc juxta externam faciem, et modum peculiarem habemus congregationem: hoc tamen apud nos non ob aliud fit, quam ut commodius doceamus verbum, ministremus Sacramenta, controversias et lites, si quando inter fratres exoriantur, et nos consulant, dirimamus, et ad Ecclesiasticam disciplinam exercendam erga eos qui correctione digna committunt, quique manifestis flagitiis infames, resipiscere nolunt, ut excommunicatione ab Ecclesiis arceantur. Ubi vero resipuerunt, rursum ad consortium Ecclesiæ et Eucharistiæ sacramentum admittantur. Non igitur ab Ecclesia catholica segregamur, cum earum rerum omnium, quæ propriæ Ecclesiæ sunt, usum habeamus.

Quantum vero attinet ad externos ritus aut ceremonias, sicubi dissimiles in Ecclesiis sint, nihil referre putamus; nam apud alios aliæ, pro gentium ac locorum varietate, inter Christianos existunt. Mutantur ceremoniæ, non mutatur fides, Christus, aut verbum. Non ergo aliæ ceremoniæ, si minus pugnent verbo Dei, incommodant Christianismo, nec separant ab Ecclesia: Non enim hæc religio aut Christiana pietas in ceremoniis aut ritibus externis sita est, sed in spiritalibus bonis, jus-also the whole eighth article in the confession itself, "*concerning the holy Catholick church.*"

The SAXON confession. "In the mean time there have been, and are, and will be, in the church of God, men holding the foundation, who have and have had, and will have, some more some less light; and sometimes saints too build stubble upon the foundation, since, especially in the wretchedness of the present times, many who have the beginnings of faith have not the privilege of being instructed, and of conferring with those who are more skilful. These, however, are in the number of those whom it is the will of God we should spare, (Ezech. 9.) who groan and grieve on account of established errour. A judgment, therefore, must and may be formed chiefly from the voice of doctrine, what and where is the true church, which, by the voice of true doctrine, and the legitimate use of the sacraments, is distinguished from all other human societies; and what the voice of true doctrine is, the very writings of the apostles and prophets, and the *creeds*, sufficiently declare. In these there

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titia, fide, gaudio, pace et vero cultu, jacto fundamento (ut Paulus ait) Apostolorum et Prophetarum, summo angulari lapide Christo Jesu, in quo quacunque structura coagmentatur, ea crescit in templum sanctum in Domino—

CONF. BOHEM. *præf. apud. Syntag. Conf. part 2. p. 232.*

is no ambiguous doctrine concerning the *foundation*, viz. concerning the articles of faith, the essence and will of God, the redemption of the Son, the law, the promises, the use of the sacraments, the ministry"—*

The HELVETIC confession. "We lay so great stress upon communion with the true church of Christ, as to deny that they can live before God, who do not communicate with the true church of God but separate themselves therefrom."† The confession then protests against harsh judgment and practices on account of individual infirmity, or of abuses and corruptions in particular churches; and adds, "It is to be observed, that we diligently teach in what the truth and unity of the church principally consist; that we may not rashly excite and cherish schisms in the church. *It consists not in ceremonies and external rites, but rather in the truth and unity of the Catholick faith. The Catholick faith has not been delivered to us in human laws, but in the divine scripture, of which the apostles' creed is a compend.* Whence we read that among the ancients there was great diversity of rites which were entirely free, and by which no one ever imagined the unity of the church to be dissolved."*

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* Interea tamen fuerunt, sunt, et erunt in ecclesia Dei homines retinentes fundamentum, etiamsi alii plus alii minus lucis habuerunt, habent, et habebunt; et interdum sancti etiam stipulas extruunt supra fundamentum: cum præsertim in hac temporum miseria multis qui habent initia fidei non concedatur ut erudiri et cum doctioribus colloqui possint. Hi sunt tamen in eorum numero quibus jubet Deus parci (Ezech. 9.) Qui gemunt et dolent propterea quod errores stabiliantur. Præcipue igitur et voce doctrinæ judicandum est, et judicari potest, quæ et ubi sit vera ecclesia quæ voce veræ doctrinæ, deinde et legitimo usu sacramentorum ab aliis gentibus discernitur: et quæ sit vox veræ doctrinæ ostendunt ipsa scripta prophetica et apostolica, et symbola. In his non est ambigua doctrina de *fundamento*; videlicet, de articulis fidei, de essentia et voluntate Dei, de Filio Redemptore, de lege, de promissionibus, de usu sacramentorum, de ministerio.

SAXON: CONF. Art. 12. *Synt. Conf. part. 2. p.* 98.

† Communionem vero cum Ecclesia Christi vera tanti facimus, ut negemus eos coram Deo vivere posse qui cum vera Dei ecclesia non communicant, sed ab ea se separant.

SYNTAG: CONF. p. 1. p. 54. art. 17.

In regard to rites and ceremonies, the twenty-seventh article remarks, "That if discordant rites are found in the churches, let no one, therefore, imagine, that the churches are disunited. 'It would be impossible,' says SOCRATES,† 'to detail all the rites of the churches in different countries. No religious sects observe the same rites, although they embrace the same doctrine concerning them. For they who are of the same faith disagree with each other about their rites.' Thus he. And we, at this day, with different rites through our churches in celebrating the Lord's supper, and in some other things, do nevertheless preserve agreement in doctrine and faith; nor is the unity and intercourse of our churches, by that difference, torn asunder. The churches have always used their liberty in such rites, as being indifferent. And we do the same at this day."*

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* Observandum præterea, diligenter docemus in quo potissimùm sit sita veritas et unitas ecclesiæ, ne temerè schismata excitemus et in ecclesia foveamus. Sita est illa non in cæremoniis et ritibus externis, sed magis in veritate et unitate fidei catholicæ. Fides catholica non est nobis tradita humanis legibus, sed scriptura divina cujus compendium est Symbolum Apostolicum. Unde legimus apud veteres rituum fuisse diversitatem variam, sed eam liberam, qua nemo unquam existimavit dissolvi unitatem ecclesiasticam.

IB. p. 56. Art. 17.

† The ecclesiastical historian.

And lest any doubt or difficulty should remain on this subject, the subscribers to the Helvetic confession thus express themselves in their preface:

"Impartial readers will clearly perceive that we have no communion with any sects or heresies, which, for this very end, we mention and reject in almost every chapter. They will, therefore, infer also, that we do not, *by any nefarious schism, separate and rend ourselves from the holy churches of Christ, in Germany, France, England, and other Christian nations:* but that we thoroughly agree with each and all of them in this confession of Christ's truth, and embrace them in unfeigned love: 'and although there be discovered, in different churches, a certain variety of expression and form of explaining doctrine; as also of rites or ceremonies according to the received usage, convenience and edification of particular churches, yet they will notice, that these things never furnished, in any period of the church, ground of dissentions and schism. The churches of Christ, as ecclesiastical history shows, have always used their liberty in this matter. For pious antiquity that mutual agreement *in the principal points of faith*, in orthodox understanding, and in brotherly love, was abundantly sufficient'."* The rest of the preface is in the same strain.

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* Quod si in ecclesiis dispares inveniuntur ritus, nemo ecclesias existimet ex eo esse dissidentes. Socrates, "Impossible fuerit," inquit, "omnes ecclesiarum quæ per civitates et regiones sunt ritus conscribere. Nulla religio eosdem ritus custodit, etiamsi eandem de illis doctrinam amplectatur. Etenim qui ejusdem sunt fidei, de ritibus inter se dissentiunt." Hæc ille. Et nos hodie ritus diversos in celebratione cænæ Domini et in aliis nonnullis rebus habentes in nostris ecclesiis, in doctrina tamen et fide non dissidemus, neque unitas societasque ecclesiarum nostrarum ea re discinditur. Semper vero ecclesiæ in hujusmodi ritibus, sicut mediis, usæ sunt libertate. Id quod nos hodie quoque facimus.

Ib. p. 82.

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* Ergo manifestissime ex his nostris æqui deprehendent lectores, nihil nos quoque habere communionis cum ullis sectis atque hæresibus quarum, hoc consilio, in singulis prope capitibus mentionem facimus, easque rejicientes perstringimus. Colligent itaque et illud, nos a sanctis Christi ecclesiis *Germaniæ*, *Galliæ*, *Angliæ*, aliarumque in orbe Christiano nationum, *nefario schismate* non sejungere atque abrumpere: sed cum ipsis omnibus et singulis, in hac confessa veritate Christiana, probè consentire; ipsasque charitate sincera complecti.

Tametsi vero in diversis ecclesiis quædam deprehenditur varietas in

Let us briefly sum up the doctrine of these extracts from the confession of the Swiss churches. —They contend

(1.) For liberty in rites and ceremonies of worship—

(2.) For mutual forbearance in the article of church government—

(3.) For latitude in the forms of doctrinal expression, provided the *substance* of evangelical truth be preserved: so as that diversity in any or all of these things shall not break up the peace of the churches.—And

(4.) For concord, communion, and love between them, upon the basis of their unity in the faith and doctrine to which they all look for thei common salvation.

It might, however, be thought that these sentiments were peculiar to the Swiss churches and, therefore, not a fair exhibition of the prevailing principles of the Reformation. But it so happens, that this confession was officially ad-

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loquutionibus et modo expositionis doctrinæ, in ritibus item vel ceremoniis, eaque recepta pro ecclesiarum quarumlibet ratione, opportunitate, et œdificatione; nunquam tamen ea, ullis in Ecclesiæ temporibus materiam dissensionibus et schismatibus visa est suppeditare. Sempe enim hac in re Christi ecclesiæ usæ sunt libertate. Id quod in histori ecclesiastica videre licet. Abundè piæ vetustati satis erat, mutuus ille in *præcipuis fidei dogmatibus*, inque sensu orthodoxo et charitate fraterna, consensus.

Ib. p. 12.

dressed, in the preface which has just been quoted, to Christians and Christian churches throughout Europe; and was approved by the churches of *England*, *Scotland*, *France*, *the United Provinces*, and by many of *Poland*, *Hungary*, *and Germany*.* Now, in these churches, there was a very great variety of religious observances, as well as differences of a higher order. Some of them, as the *Dutch* and *Genevese*, were Calvinists in doctrine, and Presbyterians in government: others as the *English*, were Episcopal; and others again, as the *German*, a sort of medium between Episcopacy and Presbytery. Here, then, we have the larger part of Protestant Christendom, proclaiming with one mouth, and at a moment when the Spirit of God and of glory rested conspicuously upon them, that the greatest of their differences, and many of them were not trifles, were not great enough to interrupt their communion, or diminish their love: but were all to be absorbed in the importance, all to disappear in the light, of that grace and truth which made them ONE in CHRIST JESUS. Nay, that were they, for such causes, to separate from each others' fellowship, they should be guilty of a NEFARIOUS SCHISM. And none of them were more free, cheerful, and decided, in asserting the obligation of this catholick communion, than the *Calvinistic Presbyterians!*

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* Eandem (confessionem) et comprobarunt ecclesiæ Angliæ, Scotiæ, Galliæ, Belgii omnes: Polonicæ quoque, Hungaricæ, atque Germanicæ multæ.

SYNT. CONF. part 1. p. 4.

Such a concurrence of public opinion and feeling, was nothing more than a concentration of that private opinion and feeling which then pervaded the church of God. The time had not come when orthodox creeds were a party *inheritance*. It was reserved for after ages to cherish a *hereditary* veneration for confessions of faith at variance, in material points, with the actual state of principle in the churches which receive them. The spectacle, now so familiar, was not yet exhibited, of *contention for every thing in a confession as for a consecrated trust; and of violent opposition to many of those very same things in practical life*—the curious and humiliating spectacle of tender affection displayed toward it as a "dead letter," and of unremitting hostility to those who would bring it forth in its energy as "a quickening spirit."

It may not be improper to give an example or two, for the sake of readers who have not access to the original sources of information. LUTHER, in a preface from his own pen to the *Bohæmic* onfession, which, it will be remembered, comrehends the faith of the WALDENSES, has the ollowing remarks concerning the churches of he Reformation:

“We ought to give the greatest possible thanks o the God and Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, vho, according to the riches of his glory, hath ommanded to shine out of darkness this light f his word, by which he would again destroy eath, and illumine life among us: and to conratulate both them,” (*the Waldenses,*) “and ourelves, that we, who were far apart, are now, by e destruction of the *parting-wall of suspicion, hereby we seemed heretics to each other*, brought ear together, and gathered into one fold under at one shepherd and bishop of our souls, who blessed forever, amen!

“But if certain differences” from other churchs, “occur in this confession of theirs concernng rites and ceremonies, or celibacy, let us reember, that all the rites and observances of all e churches never were, nor could be, the same. uch an agreement is not permitted by the various circumstances of time, place, and men; nly let the doctrine of *faith and morals* be preerved. For this ought to be the same as Paul requently admonishes; ‘*Speak all the same thing,*’ aith he. Again, ‘*That with one mouth you may lorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus*

Christ.' For that marriage should be among them," the Waldenses, "as it is among us, their state and condition does not allow. In the meantime, it is sufficient, that what is lawful to all, is not taught to be sin to any, and is believed, without injury to individual faith and conscience."*

In a letter, 1535, to these same brethren of the Waldenses in Bohemia, MELANCTHON thus writes:

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* Sed nunc prodeunt non paulo cultiores et liberiores, ne dicam etiam, illustriores et meliores ut sperem non ingratos neque inamabiles fore omnibus vere Christianis, ita, ut sperem et gratias nos agere oporteat quam maximas Deo et Patri D. N. Jesu Christi, qui secundum divitias gloriæ suæ jussit è tenebris splendescere lumen hoc verbi sui, quo denuo in nobis destrueret mortem et illuminaret vitam: et gratulari tum illis, tum nobis, quod qui inter nos ipsos quoque longè fuimus, destructo nunc interstitio suspicionis, quo nobis mutuo hæretici videbamur, facti sumus prope, et reducti simul sumus in unum ovile sub unum illum Pastorem et Episcopum animarum nostrarum, qui est benedictus in secula. Amen.

Quod si quæ differentiæ in hac eorum Confessione occurrent de ritibus et ceremoniis, vel de cælibatu, meminerimus nunquam fuisse, neque potuisse omnium Ecclesiarum omnes ritus et observationes esse æquales vel easdem. Id enim non permittunt hominum, regionum, temporum rationes et varietates, modo salva sit doctrina fidei et morum. Hæc enim debet esse eadem, ut Paulus sæpe monet. Idem dicatis (inquit) omnes. Rursus, Ut uno ore honorificetis Deum et Patrem Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. Nam ut conjugium sit apud eos eo modo liberum, ut apud nos, non sinit eorum status et conditio: Interim satis est, quod cuilibet licitum, et nulli peccatum esse docetur, et creditur salva unius cujusque fide et conscientia. Commendo igitur in Domino omnibus piis et hanc Confessionem Fratrum, in qua videbunt clare quanta injuria hactenus a Papistis fuerint damnati et vexati.

Præf. ad Conf. Bohæm. SYNT. part 2. p. 279.

"Since we agree in the *principal articles* of Christian doctrine, let us embrace each other with mutual love. Nor ought dissimilitude and ariety of rites and ceremonies to sever our afections. Paul often discourses concerning ceemonies, and forbids *Christians* to fall out on ccount of their variety, although the *world* fight riously about them.*

"As to my own feelings toward you, be asured, that I most earnestly wish that those who ove the gospel, and desire to glorify the name f Christ, would cultivate mutual love to each ther; and so, by their common endeavours, make their doctrine redound to the glory of Christ, that they may not destroy themselves by domestick feuds and discords, especially on account of things for which it is not necessary to excite disturbance."

By "things for which Christians ought not to raise disturbance," Melancthon evidently understands all things which belong not to the "principal articles of Christian doctrine."

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* "Cum de præcipuis articulis Doctrinæ Christianæ inter nos constet, complectamur nos mutuo amore. Neque dissimilitudo et varietas ritrum et cæremoniarum disjungere debet mentes nostras. Sæpe Paulus concionatur de cæremoniis, et prohibet Christianos dissidere propter varietatem ritum et cæremoniarum, quamvis mundus propter cæremonias vehementer pugnet.

Ib. p. 280.

But among all the reformers, no one stands forth a more conspicuous advocate for Catholick communion than JOHN CALVIN.*

His *Institutes of the Christian religion*, first published in 1536, and dedicated to FRANCIS the I. of France, are a professed commentary upon that little doctrinal abstract, called "the apostles' creed." On the article concerning the "*Holy Catholick church, and the communion of saints,*" which forms the basis of his fourth book, he discusses, at length, in his first chapter, this whole subject of church-communion. He refutes the arguments which are used at this hour, for separate communions—And he maintains, with that point and decision which so eminently characterize his pen, that it is not lawful, but most unlawful—subversive of Christian unity, and an affront to the majesty in the heavens, to withdraw, upon any pretext whatever, from communion with other churches which are sound in the *substantial* faith.

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* The PAUL of the Reformation. Had any thing been wanting in his own writings, in the opinion of his contemporaries, in his influence with the political and ecclesiastical cabinets of Protestant Europe, and in the dread and terrour of the Papists; to evince the greatness of this extraordinary man, it would have been supplied by the rancorous malignity which assailed him during his life; and which has been hardly, if at all, abated by his death. His very name seems at this day to blister the tribes of errour in all its gradations; and to form a solitary exception to the reverence which the world entertains for departed genius. More than two hundred and fifty years have elapsed since he went to join the apostle whom he so much resembled, in the kingdom of God; and there is hardly an enemy to the truth, of whatever size, who does not think it incumbent on him to derive importance from "a gird," at the memory of CALVIN.

Nothing could more ornament this work than the insertion of his entire chapter. But as it would extend to at least fifty pages, which would far exceed the limits of quotation; and as it is, like the most of his writings, too dense for abridgement, the reader must put up with a passage or two, merely as a specimen, and be referred to the chapter itself for more full satisfaction.

"Where the preached gospel is reverently heard, and the sacraments are not neglected, there, during such time, there is no deceitful nor ambiguous appearance of a church, of which no man is permitted to despise the authority, to disregard the admonitions, to resist the advices, or to mock the chastisements: much less to revolt from her, and to break her unity. For the Lord lays so much stress upon communion with his church, as to account that man a fugitive and a deserter from religion, who shall contumaciously alienate himself from *any Christian society which only cherishes the true ministry of the word and sacraments.* He so recommends her authority, as to reckon the violation thereof a diminution of his own," which 1 Tim. 3. 15. Eph. 1.

23. 5. 27. are produced to prove. Calvin then proceeds, "Whence it follows, that a departure from the church is a denial of God and of Christ. Wherefore, we ought to be the more on our guard against so wicked a dissention. Because, while we endeavour, as much as in us lies, to effect the ruin of God's truth, we deserve to be crushed by the lightnings of his wrath. A more atrocious crime cannot be imagined, than to violate, with sacrilegious perfidy, the conjugal union which the only begotten Son of God has deigned to contract with us."*

Again. "Our assertion, that the pure ministry of the word and the pure celebration of the sacraments, is a sufficient pledge and earnest of our safety in embracing, as a church, the society in which they shall both be found, goes so far as this, that she is never to be renounced so long as she shall persevere in them, *although, in other respects, she may abound in faults.* Even in the administration of doctrine or sacraments, some defect may possibly creep in; which yet ought not to alienate us from her communion. For all the heads of true doctrine are not of the same rank. Some are so necessary to be known, that they must be fixed and undisputed by all, as the characteristic points of religion. Such as, that 'there is one God'—that 'Christ is God, and the Son of God'—that 'our salvation depends upon the mercy of God,' and the like. There are others which, although subjects of controversy among the churches, do not destroy the unity of the faith. If, for example, one church, without the lust of contention, or obstinacy in asserting its own opinion, should think that the souls of believers departing from the body speed their flight immediately to heaven: another, not daring to determine any thing about their *place*, holds it nevertheless for certain that they live to the Lord. —What two churches should fall out on such a matter as this? When Paul says, '*Let us, as many as are perfect, be of one mind: if in any*

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* Ubi reverenter auditur Evangelii prædicatio, neque Sacramenta negliguntur, illic pro eo tempore neque fallax neque ambigua Ecclesiæ apparet facies: cujus vel auctoritatem spernere, vel monita respuere, vel consiliis refragari, vel castigationes ludere, nemini impune licet: multo minus ab ea deficere, ac ejus abrumpere unitatem. Tanti enim Ecclesiæ suæ communionem facit Dominus, ut pro transfuga et desertore religionis habeat, quicunque se a qualibet Christiana societate, quæ modo verum verbi ac sacramentorum ministerium colat, contumaciter alienarit. Sic ejus auctoritatem commendat, ut dum illa violatur, suam ipsius imminutam censeat.——Unde sequitur, discessionem ab Ecclesia, Dei et Christi abnegationem esse: quo magis a tam scelerato dissidio cavendum est: quia dum veritatis Dei ruinam, quantum in nobis est, molimur, digni sumus ad quos conterendos toto iræ suæ impetu fulminet. Nec ullum atrocius fingi crimen potest, quam sacrilega perfidia violare conjugium quod nobiscum unigenitus Dei filius contrahere dignatus est.

CALVINI, *Inst.* Lib. IV. c. 1. § 10.

thing ye are of different mind, the Lord shall reveal this also to you;"[*] does he not sufficiently indicate, that disagreement in things not so very necessary, ought not to be a source of division among Christians? To agree throughout is, indeed, our first attainment: but since no man is perfectly free from the clouds of ignorance, we either shall leave no church at all, or we must forgive mistakes in those things where ignorance may prevail without violating the substance of religion, or hazarding the loss of salvation. I would not here be understood to patronize even the minutest errours, nor to express an opinion that they ought to be cherished, in the slightest degree, by flattery or connivance. But I say that we may not, on account of smaller disagreements, rashly forsake any church wherein is preserved sound and unhurt, that doctrine which forms the safeguard of piety, and that use of the sacraments instituted by the Lord."[†]

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[*] Phil. III. 15.

[†] Quod dicimus purum verbi ministerium et purum in celebrandis sacramentis ritum, idoneum esse pignus et arrhabonem, ut tuto possimus societatem in qua utrumque extiterit, pro Ecclesia amplexari, usque eo valet ut nusquam abjicienda sit quamdiu in illis perstiterit, etiamsi multis alioqui vitiis scatcat. Quin etiam potest vel in doctrinæ, vel in sacramentorum administratione vitii quidpiam obrepere, quod alienare

"In bearing with imperfections of life, our indulgence must proceed much further. For we are here on very slippery ground, and Satan lies in wait for us with no ordinary machinations. There always have been some who, imbued with a false persuasion of their absolute sanctity, as if they had become a sort of supernatural beings, disdained the society of all men in whom they perceived the remains of human infirmity. Such,

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nos ab ejus communione non debeat. Non enim unius sunt formæ omnia veræ doctrinæ capita. Sunt quædam ita necessaria cognitu, ut fixa esse et indubitata omnibus oporteat, ceu propria religionis placita: qualia sunt, Unum esse Deum. Christum Deum esse, ac Dei Filium: In Dei misericordia salutem nobis consistere: et similia. Sunt alia, quæ inter Ecclesias controversa, fidei tamen unitatem non dirimant. Quæ enim ob hoc unum Ecclesiæ dissideant, si altera citra contentionis libidinem, citra pervicaciam asserendi, animas à corporibus demigrantes in cœlum convolare putet; altera nihil ausit definire de loco, cæterum vivere tamen Domino certo statuat? Verba sunt apostoli, *Quicunque perfecti sumus, idem sentiamus: siquid aliter sapitis, hoc quoque vobis Dominus revelabit.* Annon satis indicat, dissensionem de rebus istis non ita necessariis, dissidii materiam esse non debere inter Christianos? Primum quidem est, ut per omnia consentiamus: sed quoniam nemo est qui non aliqua ignorantiæ nubecula obvolutus sit: aut nullam relinquamus Ecclesiam oportet, aut hallucinationem condonemus in iis rebus quæ et inviolata religionis summa et citra salutis jacturam ignorari possint. Hic autem patrocinari erroribus vel minutissimis nolim, ut blandiendo et connivendo censeam fovendos: sed dico non temere ob quaslibet dissentiunculas deserendam nobis Ecclesiam, in qua duntaxat ea salva et illibata doctrina retineatur qua constat incolumitas pietatis, et Sacramentorum usus à Domino institutus custodiatur.

Id. ibid. § 12.

in old time, were the *Cathari*, and (who came very near their madness) the *Donatists*. Such, at this day, are some of the *Anabaptists*, who would fain appear to have made greater proficiency than their neighbours. There are others who go wrong more from an inconsiderate zeal for righteousness, than from such senseless pride. For when they see, that the fruits of practical life among those who enjoy the gospel, do not correspond with its doctrine, they immediately judge that no church is there. The offence is indeed very just; and we, in this most wretched age, give but too much occasion for it: nor can we excuse our cursed sloth, which the Lord will not permit to go unpunished; as he has already begun to chasten it with heavy stripes. (Wo, therefore, to us who, by our enormities, wound the weak conscience!) But, on the other hand, they whom I have mentioned, sin in their turn, by not knowing how to set limits to their offence. For where the Lord requires clemency, they, without regarding it, abandon themselves to immoderate severity. For because they do not think the church is where there is not solid purity and integrity of life, through their very hatred of crimes they quit the lawful church under the idea of shunning the faction of the ungodly."*

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"I do not deny that it is the duty of a pious man to withdraw from all private intimacy with the wicked; to entangle himself with them by no voluntary bonds. But it is one thing to avoid familiarity with bad men; another, out of dislike for them, to renounce communion with the church. As to their deeming it sacrilege to participate with such in the bread of the Lord, they are much more rigid in that particular than Paul, &c."*

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* In vitæ autem imperfectione toleranda multo longius procedere indulgentia nostra debet: hic enim valde lubricus est lapsus: neque vulgaribus machinamentis hic Satan nobis insidiatur, Fuerunt enim semper qui falsa absolutæ sanctimoniæ persuasione imbuti, tanquam aërii quidam dæmones jam facti essent, omnium hominum consortium aspernarentur, in quibus humanum adhuc aliquid subesse cernerent. Tales olim erant Cathari, et (qui ad eorum vesaniam accedebant) Donatistæ. Tales hodie sunt ex Anabaptistis nonnulli, qui supra alios volunt videri profecisse. Alii sunt qui inconsiderato magis justitiæ zelo quam insana illa superbia peccant. Dum enim apud eos quibus Evangelium annunciatur, ejus doctrinæ non respondere vitæ fructum vident, nullam illic esse Ecclesiam statim judicant. Justissima quidem est offensio, et cui plus satis occasionis hoc miserrimo seculo præbemus: nec excusare licet maledictam nostram ignaviam, quam Dominus impunitam non sinet: ut jam gravibus flagellis castigare incipit. (Væ ergo nobis, qui tam dissoluta flagitiorum licentia committimus ut propter nos vulnerentur imbecilles conscientiæ!) Sed in hoc vicissim peccant illi quos diximus, quod offensioni suæ modum statuere nesciunt. Nam ubi Dominus clementiam exigit, omissa illa, totos se immoderatæ severitati tradunt. Quia enim non putant esse Ecclesiam ubi non est solida vitæ puritas et integritas, scelerum odio a legitima Ecclesia discedunt, dum a factione improborum declinare se putant.

IBID. § 13.

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"But although this temptation sometimes besets good men through an inconsiderate zeal for righteousness, yet we shall find, that too great moroseness springs more from pride and haughtiness, and a false-opinion of one's own sanctity, than from true holiness, and the true study of it. So that they who are most daring and forward in promoting defection from a church, have, for the most part, no other inducement than to display their superiour goodness by their contempt of every one else."†

Thus Calvin.—But before we leave him, it will be proper to notice two or three things which may be supposed to diminish the value of his testimony. For it may be said, that his "Institutes," being the work of a very young man,* want that stamp and seal of authority which are impressed by mature age—that they contain the views and feelings of an individual, who, however distinguished, was still but *one*—and that his strictures relate to the communion of a Christian with his *own* church, and not to his communion with *other* churches, or to their intercommunion between themselves.

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* Non equidem nego quin pii hominis sit ab omni privata improborum consuetudine se subducere, nulla se voluntaria cum ipsis necessitudine implicare: sed aliud est malorum fugere contubernium; aliud, ipsorum odio, Ecclesiæ communionem renunciare. Quod autem sacrilegium esse putant participare cum illis panem Domini, in eo rigidiores multo sunt quam Paulus.

Ibid. § 15.

† Quanquam autem ex inconsiderato justitiæ zelo hæc tentatio bonis etiam interdum oboritur: hoc tamen reperiemus, nimiam morositatem ex superbia magis et fastu falsaque sanctitatis opinione, quam ex vera sanctitate veroque ejus studio nasci. Itaque qui ad faciendam ab Ecclesia defectionem sunt aliis audaciores, et quasi antesignani, ii ut plurimum nihil aliud causæ habent nisi ut omnium contemptu ostentent se aliis esse meliores.

Ibid. § 16.

The first of these objections might be disposed of promptly. No competent judge, who has read the "Institutes," and has not sold himself to prejudice or faction, would willingly endanger the credit of his own understanding at *fifty*, by questioning the intellectual maturity of CALVIN at *twenty-four*. The objection, however, has no place. Subsequent reflection, observation, and experience, served only to confirm his earlier judgment. In a letter to his friend FARELL, three years afterwards, he has the following expressions: "I only insisted upon this, that they," the pious, "should not schismatically rend asunder any church; which, although extremely corrupt in morals, and even infected with strange doctrines, had not entirely revolted from that doctrine in which Paul teaches that the church of Christ is founded."*

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* They were written before he had completed the twenty-fifth year of his age. He was born in July, 1509, and this dedication to FRANCIS the I. bears the date of August, 1536. But a previous edition had been published in 1535.

To return to the "Institutes." It is plain, from their history, that they bear the richest and ripest fruits which the mind of their authour had cultivated. Upon none of his productions did he bestow so much pains and labour as upon this. It is in reality his *chef-d'œuvre*; and so he himself considered it. He was, therefore, continually revising and retouching it, as it ran through various editions, for the space of twenty-three years; and it received its finishing from his elegant pen in 1559, when he was *fifty* years old, only five years before his death.†

That he was but *one* is true; yet a truth of no importance to the argument; unless it could be demonstrated that he stood alone. How different the fact was, the preceding pages have already proved. And this very work, as published in French and Latin, was drawn up in behalf of the French churches, to show what sort of doctrine they believed and taught; so that it is, in some measure, a work of *public authority;* and it obtained the unbounded applause and approbation of both the learned and religious world. Even the fastidious SCALIGER, who seldom praised any body but himself, or any thing but his own, was among its admirers and eulogists. It was translated into *Italian*, *German*, *Flemish*, *Spanish* and *English :* and so often republished in the original Latin, that Mons. *Masson*, by a strong hyperbole, says, it was printed "a *thousand* times'."* Calvin himself informs us, that it met with the most encouraging reception from the Christian publick—"with such favour from *almost all the pious*," they are his own words, "as he had not dared even to wish, far less to expect."† It appears, then, that his views of communion were the views of reformed Europe, or the work which contains them would never have been so popular in the churches.

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* Hoc unum contendebam, ne schismate scinderent qualemcumque ecclesiam: quæ, utcunque esset corruptissima moribus, doctrinis etiam exoticis infecta, non tamen desciverit penitus ab ea doctrina qua ecclesiam Christi fundari docet Paulus.

CALV. *Epist.* Opp. T. IX. p. 6.

† See his epistle to the reader, prefixed to the "Institutes," under date of 1st of August, 1559. Opp. T. IX. Amst. 1667. Fol.

The idea that the communion referred to, is communion with one's *own* particular church, and not with other churches, either by admitting their members or joining in their ordinances, has nothing to support it, but flies in the face of the very chapter which discusses the subject. Its title is, "*Of the* TRUE CHURCH *with which we are to cultivate unity; because she is the mother of* ALL THE PIOUS"*—a designation belonging only to the ONE church of God, and not to any sect. And the third part of that chapter is devoted to the proof of this proposition, "*That we are in no manner to forsake the catholick church and the communion of saints.*" "*On which account,*" it is added, "the *errours of the* NOVATIANS, ANABAPTISTS, *and other* SCHISMATICAL *and* IDLE-MINDED MEN, *concerning this doctrine, are abundantly refuted.*"† But what CALVIN calls the "errours of the Novatians," &c. are precisely the arguments urged against the communion which these pages recommend and vindicate. Therefore, the communion spoken of, is not simply that which we ought to maintain with our own particular branch of the church, but which we ought to maintain with the *whole* church through the medium of any one of her branches to which we have access. That this is CALVIN's meaning, appears not only from the whole tenour of his discourse, but also from his anxiety expressed in a letter to Archbishop CRANMER, to unite all the reformed churches. Episcopacy was established in England; CALVIN was a divine-right Presbyterian. Yet even that difference was not sufficient, in his eyes, to hinder communion. According to the first principle of the Reformation, he was willing to compound for the pure word and worship of God, i. e. in its substance. For, in a letter of Oct. 22, 1548, he congratulates the Lord Protector of England, on his having been a principal instrument in "restoring the pure and sincere worship of God, and the sound preaching of his word."* Yet in that very letter he entreats the protector to *complete* the work of reformation; and even points out corruptions and abuses which needed the knife.

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* Millies excusa. Vide BAYLE, *Dict. Historique et Critique.* Art. CALVIN, note F.

† ——eo piorum fere omnium favore,—quem nunquam voto expetere, nedum sperare ausus fuissem.

Vid. ep. supra cit.

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* De vera ecclesia cum qua colenda est unitas: quia piorum omnium mater est.

† 3. A sancta ecclesia Catholica et sanctorum communione non est ullo modo discedendum: ea propter Novatianorum, Anabaptistarum, ac ejusmodi schismaticorum et malè feriatorum hominum circa hanc doctrinam errores, a sect. 10. ad fin. cap. abunde refelluntur.

Tom. IX. p. 270.

No doubt can now remain as to the nature of that communion for which CALVIN, backed by the greatest and best men of the age, so nervously and eloquently contends. And their support of his doctrine precludes the necessity of further detail as to private opinion. Even illustrious names might seem to be introduced more for ostentation than for conviction. For in very deed, the voice of CALVIN, on this subject, is the general voice of the people of God in that age of grace and truth.

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* Est sane de quo gratias agamus Deo et Patri nostro, quod opera tua uti voluerit ad tantum opus, ut per te in primis purum et sincerum suum cultum in regno Angliæ restitueret; Præstiterit etiam ut salutis doctrina audiretur passim, et fideliter annunciaretur omnibus qui aures arrigere dignarentur.

CALV. *Epist.* p. 39.

To their doctrine they added their example. I do not say that their example corresponded *perfectly* with their principles. It would be a miracle of high degree, if they who are imperfect in all things else, should be perfect in their love. Nor have I forgotten the separation of the Lutheran from the other Protestant churches. Yet this took place against the sentiments of Luther and his most distinguished associates. It was not effected without a struggle; and did not continue without magnanimous efforts to heal the wound.

CALVIN not only subscribed the *Augustan*, i. e. the *Lutheran* confession, as he himself informs us;* but he expressly declares, in a letter to his friend FARELL, that "the petty peculiarities" in the Lutheran church, evidently meaning that they were petty when compared with the great things of the common salvation, were no just causes of disunion.*

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* Ep. SCHALINGIO, p. 113.

Henry Alting, professor of divinity at *Heidelberg*, and afterwards at *Groningen*, and a distinguished member of the Synod of *Dordt*,† "assures us, that this was the common opinion of the reformed divines who followed Bucer and Calvin. For, proposing this question in his problems, *whether the orthodox may lawfully communicate in the Lord's supper with the* Lutherans? he resolves it in the affirmative, upon these four arguments:

"1. Because they all agree in fundamentals.

"2. Because men ought to preserve unity in the church, and hate schism.

"3. Because we have the example of the prophets, and of Christ and his apostles, for communicating in more corrupt churches than the *Lutherans* are.

"4. Because the best divines of the last age," the Reformation, "have approved it, as Capito, Bucer, Calvin, Martyr, Zanchy, Ursin, Tossanus, Paræus, Scultetus, and others: *some of whom, as they had occasion,* DID ACTUALLY COMMUNICATE *with them.*"‡

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* Calv. Farello. p. 9.

† Bayle, Dict. Crit. Art. Alting. Tom. I. p. 169, 170.

‡ Alting. *Theol. Problem Par.* 2. *Probl.* 18. p. 331. quoted as above by Bingham, *Orig. eccles.* Vol. II. p. 825. Fol.

Peter Martyr, a man of high standing among the reformers, went over to England at the invitation of Cranmer by order of Edward VI.; and, though far enough from holding the divine right of Episcopacy, scrupled not to join in permanent communion with the church of England, and to accept a theological chair in the university of Oxford; and that he would as freely have communed with the *Lutherans*, had they been as forbearing as himself, may be gathered from the disapprobation with which he mentions the harsh behaviour of some Lutheran ministers toward one of their brethren, for kindly receiving the *English* Protestants, when they fled from the persecutions of bloody Mary, and for communicating sometimes with the church of Friezland.*

Knox, the Scottish Elijah, as firm a Presbyterian as Calvin himself, and still less indulgent to what he considered as reliques of Papal superstition—even Knox—with all his antiepiscopal feelings, "officiated for a considerable time in the church of England"†—assisted in revising the *Book of Common Prayer*‡—accepted, at

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* See his letter to Calvin, from Strasburgh, 23d Sept. 1555, at the end of his *Loci communes*, p. 770. *ed. Genev.* 1624. Fol.

† M'Crie's *life of* John Knox, Vol. I. p. 102. Lond. 1813. 8vo.

‡ Ib. p. 87.

Frankfort on the Maine, the charge of a congregation composed of English exiles, differing much in their views of publick worship—and, "when the congregation had agreed to adopt the order of the Genevan church, and requested him to proceed to administer the communion according to it; although he approved of that order, he declined to carry it into practice, until their learned brethren in other places were consulted. At the same time he signified that he had not freedom to administer the sacraments agreeably to the English liturgy."* The difficulty resulted in a compromised "form of worship, in which some things were taken from the English liturgy, and others added which were thought suitable to their circumstances. This was to continue in force until the end of the next April; and if any dispute arose in the interval, it was to be referred to five of the most celebrated foreign divines. The agreement was subscribed by all the members of the congregation; thanks were publickly returned to God for the restoration of harmony; and the communion was received as a pledge of union, and the burial of all past offences."†

It is well known to have been a favourite object with Calvin to form a general union of all the Protestant churches. This he never could have proposed without a full conviction that they were sufficiently united in principle to be united in fact; and to reciprocate, by agreement, the most liberal and ample communion in the things of Christ. The idea of reducing them all exactly to his own standard of propriety never entered his mind. He was too much of a *Christian* to ask for so huge a sacrifice; and too much of a *statesman* to suppose it possible. His plan, as is clear from the whole drift of his writings and advices, would have been to bind them up in a great confederation; bringing them as near to each other as the state of public habit, under the influence of mutual candour and concession, should permit; fixing them firmly there, and leaving all the rest to evangelical liberty. So that, as in old time, a Christian, passing from his own church and country to another, should be welcomed as a citizen of the kingdom of God, and should conform peaceably to the order of that province of the kingdom which should thus receive him. Could he have succeeded in removing the grosser offences which remained in some of the churches, his wishes had been fulfilled—his holy triumph completed. For as no one more thoroughly detested, or pertinaciously resisted, whatever tended, even remotely, to ensnare conscience, or to reconcile the minds of men to the superstitions and idolatry of Rome; so no one ever treated, with more majestic disregard, those unessential peculiarities about which so much heat is kindled by vanity. His critics have set down such things to the score of his *pride*, mostly if not merely, because they could not rise to the level of his magnanimity: just as they have mistaken for arrogance, that manly and subduing spirit which walks in the upper regions of light and truth. He, in effect, said to the Lutheran and English churches, Keep your "smaller observances;" let us have no discord on their account; but let us march, in one solid column, under the Captain of salvation; and, with undivided counsels, pour in the legions of the cross upon the territory of darkness and death. "I wish," says he, in a letter to CRANMER, "I wish it could be brought about, that men of learning and dignity from the principal churches might have a meeting; and, after a careful discussion of the several points of faith, might hand down to posterity the doctrine of the scripture settled by their common judgment. But among the greatest evils of our age this also is to be reckoned, that our churches are so distracted one from another, that human society scarcely flourishes among us, much less that holy communion between the members of Christ, which all profess in words, and few sincerely cultivate in fact.——Thus it happens, that, by the dissipation of its members, the body of the church lies prostrate and mangled. As to myself, were I likely to be of any service, I should not hesitate, were it necessary, to *cross* TEN *seas for such a purpose.* If the question were only concerning giving aid to *England*, that would be with me a sufficiently powerful reason. Now, *when the object is to obtain such an agreement of learned men upon strict scriptural principles, as may accomplish an union of churches in other respects widely asunder, I do not think it lawful for me to decline any labours or troubles.*"*

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* Ib. p. 146.

† Ib. p. 128.

The reader will take notice, that this letter was written in 1551, several years before some of the principal Protestant confessions were published. The consequence was, that the churches had no proper *publick* understanding. The mighty business of the reformation was carried on, and the connexion of its interests maintained, chiefly by the correspondence of *individuals* in different parts of Europe. It is this state of things in which churches, as such, hardly knew one another, that CALVIN describes, deplores, and wished to amend. Nothing is further from his meaning, than that their respective members would not commune with each other in all Christian ordinances, as they had opportunity. Repugnancies on that head were then confined to the *Lutherans* and *Anabaptists.* When the Protestant churches had, with one voice, glorified God in their good confessions of his truth, one of the measures which lay so near CALVIN's heart was partially executed. He would have preferred a *joint-confession,* as the bond of visible union and communion. Such a confession must necessarily have excluded all local peculiarities—all minute and secondary matters: and instead of

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* Atque utinam impetrari posset, ut in locum aliquem docti et graves viri ex præcipuis Ecclesiis coirent, ac singulis fidei capitibus diligenter excussis, de communi omnium sententia certam posteris traderent scripturæ doctrinam. Cæterum in maximis seculi nostri malis hoc quoque numerandum est, quod ita aliæ ab aliis distractæ sunt Ecclesiæ, ut vix humana jam inter nos vigeat societas, nedum emineat sancta membrorum Christi communicatio, quam ore profitentur omnes, pauci reipsa sincere colunt.——Ita fit, ut membris dissipatis, lacerum jaceat Ecclesiæ corpus. Quantum ad me attinet, siquis mei usus fore videbitur, ne decem quidem maria, si opus sit, ob eam rem trajicere pigeat. Si de juvando tantum Angliæ regno ageretur, jam mihi ea satis legitima ratio foret. Nunc cum quæratur gravis et ad scripturæ normam probe compositus doctorum hominum consensus, quo Ecclesiæ procul alioqui dis-

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sitæ inter se coalescant, nullis vel laboribus vel molestiis parcere fas mihi esse arbitror.

Calv. Epist. p. 61.

arguing the several classes of confessors to be of different religious races on account of things which depend upon climate, habit, state of society, and such like incidents, would have marked their common origin by their essential resemblance. Varieties not affecting the substance of religion would have been no better reason with them for questioning a man's relation to them, and his claim upon their holiest fellowship, than tawny skin or crisped hair is, with believers in God's word, for denying to be of their own species and entitled to their kind offices, one who has their bones, sinews, flesh, face, voice, faculties, and other proper attributes of human nature. This is a scheme worthy of reformers. It was Calvin's: it is the Bible's.

What this lover of peace with truth projected upon a large scale, was actually attempted and executed, after his death, upon a smaller one; sufficient, however, to shew which way the current of Christian charity was setting in.

The agreement of Poland, (*Poloniæ consensus*) at the Synod of *Sendomir*, in 1570, six years after Calvin's decease, embracing the churches of greater and lesser *Poland*, which were organized under the *Augsburgh* or Lutheran confession, and under the *Helvetic* or Swiss confession, what would now be called Calvinistic; as also under the confession of the WALDENSES, was bottomed upon those comprehensive principles which supported the plan of CALVIN.

This consensus was for the express purpose of wiping away the reproach of their enemies, and of promoting brotherly concord and communion on the ground of their agreement in the leading truths of the gospel; all things else being matters of forbearance.

* "Of this holy and mutual agreement," say

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* Hujus autem sancti mutuique consensus vinculum fore arbitrati sumus convenimusque, ut, quemadmadum illi nos nostrasque ecclesias, et confessionem nostram in hac Synodo publicatam, et Fratrum, orthodoxas esse testantur; Sic etiam nos illorum ecclesias eodem Christiano amore prosequamur, et orthodoxas fateamur. Extremumque valedicamus et ad altum silentium imponamus omnibus rixis, distractionibus, dissidiis; quibus evangeli cursus non sine maxima piorum offensione impeditus est; et unde adversariis nostris non levis calumniandi et veræ Christianæ religioni nostræ contradicendi occasio sit subministrata.

Quin potius paci et tranquillitati publicæ studere, charitatem mutuam execere, et operas mutuas ad ædificationem ecclesiæ, pro fraterna conjunctione nostra, præstare debemus.

Adhæc recipimus mutuo consensu, omni studio nostris fratribus omnibus persuasuros, atque eos invitaturos ad hunc Christianum et unanimem consensum amplectendum, colendum, et conservandum; illumque alendum et obsignandum, præcipue auditione verbi, (frequentando tam hujus quàm alterius cujusque confessionis cœtus) et sacramentorum usu; observato tamen recto ordine, et gradu tam disciplinæ quàm consuetudinis uniuscujusque Ecclesiæ.

Ritus autem et cæremonias uniuscujusque ecclesiæ liberos hac concordia et conjunctione relinquimus. Non enim multum refert qui ritus observentur, modò sarta tecta et incorrupta existat ipsa doctrina et fundamentum fidei ac salutis nostræ. Quem ad modum et ipsa confes-

they, "we have thought and agreed that it would be a confirmation, if as they," the *Lutherans*, "bear witness that we, and our church, and our confession, published in this Synod, and the churches and confession of the brethren," (*Waldenses*) "are orthodox: so also we should manifest the same Christian love toward their churches, and should acknowledge their orthodoxy: and should, on both sides, abandon and consign to silence, all quarrels, distractions, and dissensions, by which the course of the gospel, to the very great offence of many pious people, is hindered; and by which no light occasion is furnished to

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sio Augustana et Saxonica de ea re docent; et in hac confessione nostra, in præsenti Synodo Sendomiriensi publicata, id ipsum expressimus.

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Atque ut Colophonem huic consensui et mutuæ concordiæ imponamus, ad hanc fraternam societatem conservandam tuendamque, non incommodum fore putamus, in locum certum convenire, ubi una ex mutuis confessionibus, compendium corporis doctrinæ (improbitate hostium ad id adacti) eliceremus, et in publicum ederemus; ut invidorum hominum ora obturarentur, cum maximo omnium piorum solatio: sub titulo omnium ecclesiarum Polonicarum reformatarum, et Lithuanicarum, et Samogiticarum, nostræ confessioni consentientium.

Datis igitur junctisque dextris, sancte promisimus et recepimus invicem omnes, fidem et pacem colere, fovere, et in dies ad ædificationem regni Dei magis magisque amplificare velle; omnesque occasiones distractionis ecclesiarum evitaturos. Denique, se immemores oblitosque sui ipsius, ut veros Dei ministros decet, solius Jesu Christi Salvatoris nostri gloriam promoturos; et evangelii ipsius veritatem propagaturos tum factis tum dictis, recepimus.

SYNT. CONF. p. 2. p. 289, 290.

our adversaries, both of calumniating ourselves, and of opposing our true Christian religion. It is rather our duty to study the public peace and tranquility; to exercise mutual charity; and to employ, according to our brotherly union, our mutual efforts for the edification of the church.

"We, moreover, pledge ourselves to use our utmost endeavours to persuade and invite all our brethren to embrace, respect, and preserve this our Christian and unanimous agreement; and to cherish and seal it *especially by hearing of the word, (in frequenting the assemblies of both confessions,) and by the use of the sacraments: always observing good order, and the rule both of discipline and custom in each of the churches respectively.*

"But the rites and ceremonies of each church we do, by this our hearty consent, leave free. For it makes little difference what *rites* are observed, provided the fundamental doctrine of our faith and salvation be untouched and uncorrupted, as the *Augustan* and *Saxon* confession teach on that head; and as we have expressed the same in this our confession, published in the present Synod of Sendomir.

"And to complete this our consent and agreement, we have thought that, in order to preserve this our brotherly association, it will not be in-convenient to meet at some appointed place, where we may together form a compend of doctrine taken from our mutual confessions; and publish it to the world to stop the mouths of invidious men, and minister great consolation to all the pious.

"Having, therefore, given to each other the right hand of union, we have all most sacredly promised and pledged ourselves, to cultivate, nourish, and daily to aim at increasing, our peace and faith, to the building up the kingdom of God; and that we will shun all occasions of distracting the churches. Finally, we have pledged ourselves, that regardless of selfish considerations, as becomes the true ministers of God, we will promote only the glory of JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR; and will propagate the truth of his gospel in word and deed."

Next comes a prayer for the divine blessing; then the subscriptions to this agreement: and the instrument closes with the 1st verse of the cxxxiii psalm—"*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!!*"

A few days after the ratification of this *consensus*, viz. on the Lord's day, the 28th of May, 1570, it was carried into effect in the following manner: viz. "The ministers, patrons, and whole congregation of the Bohœmic confession, both

Poles and *Germans* of both sexes, proceeded in a body from their own tò the *Lutheran* place of worship, to attend morning service; and there, the hearers of both parties being solemnly assembled, two of the *Waldensian* ministers preached, one to the *Poles*, the other to the *Germans.* In the same way, in the afternoon, the congregation of the *Augustan* confession, with their patrons and ministers, having made a procession from their church through the city, went to the church of the Bohemian brethren, in the suburbs, the *Poles* to the Poles, the *Germans* to the Germans;* and there two Lutheran ministers preached to them the word of God. In each place, after reading the agreement, the ministers gave their attestation aloud to the holy concord and union; and exhorted their hearers on both sides to cherish and guard it as a singular gift of God; and, laying aside all groundless suspicions of each other, now that they had become one in the Lord and in his truth, to keep his way, and cultivate brotherly love. This was accompanied with ardent prayers to God, and with the greatest joy and acclamation of all present, exclaiming, '*Behold, how good and pleasant it is for breth-*

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* i. e. the Lutheran Poles to the Bohemian Poles; and the Lutheran Germans to the Bohemian Germans.

ren to dwell together in unity!!' Finally, the whole being made one church, sung with one voice that hymn of exultation and thanksgiving, 'We praise thee, O God, &c'."* This "agreement," was unanimously confirmed in a general Synod at *Cracow*, Sept. 1573. And, as the conclusion of their business, "The whole Synod, the brethren, superintendants, elders, ministers, patrons, and all the rest, ratified and sealed that holy consent and union; and, finally, after joining together in publick worship, and *in the communion of the body and blood of the Lord, according to the ceremonies of the church at Cracow,* they returned home, rejoicing in brotherly love, and praising the Lord."†

This same agreement was reconfirmed in a general Synod at *Petrikow*, a town of Great Poland, June 1578, and a regulation there made, that a congregation of either confession, (Luthean or Calvinist,) might freely call a minister rom the other.*

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* SYNT. CONF. p. 2. p. 296.

† Porro tota hæc Cracoviensis Synodus, omnium confessionum fratres, Superattendentes, Seniores, Ministri, et Domini Patroni, quorum hic sunt expressa nomina, et reliqui congregati, sanctum consensum ac unionem—confirmarunt et obsignarunt: denique, Sacra synaxi, corpus et sanguinem Domini simul percipientes, iis cæremoniis quas Ecclesia Cracoviensis in usu habet. Atque ita, in amore fraterno gaudentes et Dominum collaudantes, ad suos redierunt.

IB. p. 304.

The renewal of the agreement was repeated n a general Synod at *Uladislaw*, 1583; and again at *Tornaw*, in Hungary, 1595,† and continued to be religiously observed as late at least as 1634.‡

This spirit was not confined to *Poland*. Of all the Protestant churches, none did more and suffered more for the faith of Christ than the churches of France. Purer in doctrine, fairer in government, and chaster in discipline, the world never saw. Their treasure and their blood flowed alike, and flowed freely in the cause of their Redeemer. And none were more forward in that labour of love, the union of Christian churches in one great spiritual commonwealth.

It appears, from the records of the Synod of St. *Foy*, 1578, that an "assembly of many deputies from sundry famous reformed churches, kingdoms, and provinces, at which attended Mr. **Esnard**, as a representative from several French churches, met at *Franckfort*, in 1577, by invitation of the Prince Elector JOHN CASIMIR, prince *Palatine*, and duke of *Bavaria*—that they laid down several means and expedients for *uniting all the reformed churches in Christendom in one common bond of union*; as also for terminating the differences which had risen up and were fomented among them by their common adversaries; and for hindering some hot-headed and bigotted divines from condemning, as they had threatened, even to *Anathema*, the greatest and soundest part by far of the Christian reformed churches—and, for the suppression of such imprudent and wicked designs, unanimously resolved to petition the princes of the empire, who adhered to the confession of *Auxbourg*, i. e. the *Lutheran* princes—and had, moreover, given an express charge, that one uniform confession of faith should be framed, as the general and common confession of all Protestants; and several copies of it sent to all those kingdoms and provinces in which those churches were gathered, to be examined and approved by them, and to be crowned by their joint consent and approbation."—It appears also, "that they had agreed upon the time and place for the meeting of deputies from the churches concerned, and that they had sent a special invitation to the French churches to send thither persons of approved piety, integrity.

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* VII. Siquidem unio facta est inter nos Helveticæ, Augustanæ, et Bohæmicæ confessioni addictos, liberum erit ecclesiæ seu Patronis cœtus unius confessionis justis causis ac bono ordine, a Superattendentibus alterius confessionis ministrum petere ac ad se vocare.

Ib. p. 307.

† Ib. p. 308: p. 316. ‡ Davenantii sent. ad Joh. Duræum. 5. *Cantab.* 1640.

and experience, with full powers to treat and decide on all points of doctrine, and other matters concerning the union, peace, and preservation of the churches, and the pure worship of God."

This proposal was received with great satisfaction by the general Synod of the French churches; and four ministers, together with the "most illustrious Lord Viscount of *Turenne*," were appointed commissioners to the general meeting of deputies.*

The same design was prosecuted by the Synod of FIGEAC, in 1579, at which the confession of faith of the *Dutch* and *French* churches in the low countries was approved; and a consultation was held on the most proper means to "reunite the several confessions of all those nations which agree in doctrine, into one common confession, and which may hereafter be approved by all those nations. And this pursuant to the project laid down in the late conference at *Neustadt*, *Sept.* 1577."†

With equal willingness the Synod of *Vitré*, 1583, embraced a proposition made in their own body for "an union and agreement between the churches of *Germany* and theirs—they solicited Mr. *Chandieu* to undertake a mission for that purpose; and Mr. *Salnar*, after conference with Lord Du Plessis, to write in their name and by their authority on the subject, to the princes and divines of Germany.*

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* QUICK'S SYNODICON, Vol. I. p. 120, 121. Fol.

† IB. p. 133. It would seem from this, that there were two conferences held in 1577 for a Protestant union; one at *Neustadt* in *Brunswick*, Germany, and the other at *Frankfort*; for this latter also took place in September. *Quick*, Vol. I. p. 121.

Twenty years afterwards, viz. in 1603, at the Synod of *Gap*, the brethren of *Dauphiny* "desired that some means might be contrived for a conference and union with the *Lutheran* churches in *Germany*, that so the schism between them and the *French* churches might be removed." Whereupon, the assembly "desirous to see the fruits of such a noble project, ordered letters to be despatched to the orthodox universities of *Germany*, *England*, *Geneva*, *Basil*, and *Leyden*; and to *Messieurs des Gourdon* and *de Fontaines*, in *London*, entreating them to co-operate in effecting this holy union; and that princes might be engaged to put forth their authority therein, that so they, the Protestant churches, might all be more firmly united among themselves in the confession of one and the same doctrine."†

This zeal was quickened by a proposal for such an union made by king *James the VI.* to the *French* churches, obscurely hinted in a letter from his majesty of March 15th, 1614; and fully explained, on his authority, by Mr. *David Hume*,* "for reuniting the churches of divers nations into one and the selfsame confession and doctrine." At their general Synod, held at *Tonneins* the May following, they drew the outlines of a detailed plan of union, in which the following are conspicuous features:

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* Quick's *Synodicon*, Vol. I. p. 153. † Ib. p. 289.

1. To avoid the *Arminian* controversy.

For they say, that instead of disputes about religion, "it were better to lay on the table, before the assembled delegates, the several confessions of the reformed churches of *England*, *Scotland*, *France*, the *Netherlands*, *Switzerland*, and the *Palatinate*, &c.; and, that out of all these confessions, there might be framed one in common to them all, in which divers points may be omitted, the knowledge whereof is not needful to our everlasting happiness. Among which, the controversy moved by *Piscator*, and *several subtil opinions broached by* VAN ARMIN," (*Arminius*,)

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* Not the celebrated historian of that name, who lived more than a century later; but a countryman and probably kinsman of his: a man of quite "another spirit," which seems to have entirely evaporated before the family-blood found its way into the veins of the unbelieving philosopher.

"*about free will, the saints' perseverance, and predestination, may be reckoned.*"

2. To avoid contentions about *ceremonies and church-government*—which they call "*quillets:*" i. e. subtleties, niceties: in regard to which they say "A mutual declaration should be made, and added unto the said confeſsion, by which the said deputies, in the names of their principals, do declare, that the churches *shall not judge nor condemn one another for this difference, it not hindering our mutual agreement in the same faith and doctrine; and that for all this, we may cordially embrace each other as true believers and joint-members of one and the same body.*"

Thus far the business was to proceed among deputies from the reformed churches only. They were to conclude after "a most religious fast," with the celebration of the Lord's supper, "wherein the pastors from *England* and the other nations should all communicate together." And then to disperse, after appointing another day for a new meeting within the year, that they might have an opportunity of consulting their respective constituents.

During the interval, means were to be used for securing the attendance of some *Lutheran* divines at this second assembly: and in such an expectation it was agreed,

3. To wave the points in debate between the *reformed* and the *Lutherans:* i. e. to express the doctrine on these points in terms which might be safe for conscientious, and satisfactory to modest men: and, for this end, to model their agreement after the *Poloniæ consensus,* or "concordat of the Polish churches, made at *Sendomir,* in the year 1570."

This second assembly, like the first, was to open with a solemn fast, and to close "with the celebration of the holy supper of our Lord, at which, both the *Lutheran* and other ministers should communicate together."*

On this plan for Protestant union, it may be proper to remark,

First. That it did not contemplate merely the reciprocation of ministerial and Christian fellowship in the several churches, for *that* had been in regular practice among Protestants all along: the majority of the *Lutherans* excepted. It went much further; even to the organization of the whole Protestant interest in a publick federative union; each of the component churches retaining, however, its own independence and internal order. It was, in fact, Calvin's plan revived, or rather prosecuted; for it does not appear to have been ever abandoned.

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* QUICK, Vol. I. p. 434, 437.

Secondly. That it furnished no proof of the French churches, which were the most active in promoting it, having at all declined from their soundness in the faith, or their zeal in maintaining it. For, three years afterwards, their general Synod of *Vitré*, appointed commissioners to attend the Synod of *Dordt* for the purpose of deciding on the several points of the *Arminian* controversy; and, three years after this, viz. at their general Synod held in the town of *Alez*, 1620, they *unanimously* approved the articles agreed upon at *Dordt;* incorporated them with their own canons, and ordered them to be "sworn and subscribed to by the pastors and elders of their churches, and by the doctors and professors in their universities; and, also by all those that were to be ordained and admitted into the ministry, or into the professor's chair, in any of their universities; with a proviso, that if any one of these persons should reject, either in whole or in part, the doctrine contained in, and decided by, the canons of the said council," of *Dordt;* "or refuse to take the oath of consent and approbation, he should not be admitted into any office or employment, either in their churches or universities."* Thus unequivocally did they assert, and take care to perpetuate in their schools and pulpits, the pure doctrine of the gospel. But to show how well they could unite catholicism with fidelity—the love of the brethren with the love of truth; and how cordially they could take to their bosom the very persons against whose errours they raised the voice of their testimony, provided those errours subverted not the foundation of their faith, the following extract from the minutes of the second Synod of *Charenton*, in 1631, will amply suffice:

"*An act in favour of the* LUTHERAN *brethren.*"

"The province of *Burgundy* demanding, *Whether the faithful of the* AUGUSTANE *confession might be permitted to contract marriages in our churches, and to present children in our churches unto baptism, without a previous abjuration of those opinions held by them contrary to the belief of our churches?* this Synod declareth that, inasmuch as the churches of the confession of *Ausbourg* do agree with the other reformed churches *in the principal and fundamental points of the true religion*, and that there is neither superstition nor idolatry in their worship; the faithful of the said confession, who with a spirit of love and peaceableness do join themselves to the communion of our churches in this kingdom, may be, *without any abjuration at all made by them, admitted unto the Lord's table with us; and, as sureties, may present children unto baptism*; they promising the consistory, that they will never solicit them, either directly or indirectly, to transgress the doctrine believed and professed in our churches; but will be content to instruct and educate them in those points and articles which are in common between us and them, and wherein both the *Lutherans* and we are unanimously agreed."*

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* QUICK, Vol. II. p. 37, 38.

If from France we pass into Holland, we shall there find the same generous feeling toward all the parts of the church of God. Her early confession, the *Belgic*, already quoted, shows in what light she contemplated the privilege and duty of church-communion. That confession, as has been stated, received the unqualified approbation of the continental divines at the Synod of *Dordt*, in 1618; and it received also, with the exception of its articles upon church-government, the approbation of the Episcopal divines who were sent thither by James VI.

The assembling of such a Synod, and their harmonious proceedings, are the best practical commentary upon the understood principle of Protestant communion. Here was a collection of representatives from the reformed churches of Europe, France excepted, whose deputies were stopped by a mandate of the king; various in their modifications of order and rites of worship, yet one in the common faith of the gospel. *Dutch*, *German*, *Genevese*, *Swiss*, all non-episcopal, joined by an English bishop and other Episcopal delegates, met together to discuss and decide one of the most serious and shaking controversies that ever agitated the church of God. Here they unite in the most solemn acts of ministerial communion. The public prayers are offered up by Presbyterians in their own manner. By way of showing their concord and confidence, they judge it expedient to have now and then sermons in Latin before the Synod. They begin with requesting the *foreign divines* to undertake this service in order.* And the very first man they place in the pulpit is Dr. JOSEPH HALL, a high-toned Episcopalian, then Dean of *Worcester*, and afterwards bishop of *Norwich*. He preached to them from *Eccles*. vii. 16. In his sermon he calls the Synod, thus composed, " a most holy assembly of the prophets."* The church of *Holland*, upon the supposition of her adhering to "the faith which she had till then received, and to the confession common to her with the other churches;" he salutes as the "pure spouse of Christ." And then exclaims, "we are brethren, let us also be associates! What have we to do with the disgraceful titles of *Remonstrants*, *Contra-Remonstrants*, *Calvinists*, *Arminians*?† We are *Christians*, let us also be of one

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* Quick, Vol. II. p. 297.

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* ACT. SYNOD DORDRECT, Sess. V. part 1. p. 18. 1620. Fol.

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[*] Sanctissima corona prophetarum. Ib. Sess. XVI. p. 38.

[†] These names were then recent, and had not settled down into fixed appellations, as some of them have done since. They have now become *technical terms* in theology and ecclesiastical history; and, like other technical terms, they convey very complex ideas with more brevity and precision than could easily be done by a periphrasis. Every organization of men, and every system of principles must have a *name*. This, in itself, is of no importance, but is useful for the purpose of discrimination. It would be amusing, if it were not mortifying, to see with what eagerness some men endeavour to fix a name upon others; and with what anxiety these again labour to shake it off. To call one a Calvinist or an Arminian, is to impute to him the doctrine maintained by Calvin or Arminius—but it proves nothing. To refuse the appellation is not to reject the doctrine—and so proves nothing.—It is all a petty squabble about words. While differences subsist, we must talk about them, and we may as well use the phraseology which marks them. If "Calvinist" and "Arminian," are to be banished, there is no reason why "Lutheran" and "Reformed," "Protestant" and "Papist," "Socinian," "Arian," "Universalist," "Episcopalian," "Presbyterian," and the whole series of party names should not go with them. Suppose it done. *cui bono?* what do you gain? You would have to replace them with another set; and there is the old contest over again. Yet it is not to be denied, that hurtful

soul. We are one body, let us also be of one mind. By that tremendous name of the Almighty God —by the pious and gentle bosom of our common mother—by your own souls—by the most holy compassions of JESUS CHRIST our Saviour; aim at peace, brethren; enter into peace, that laying aside all prejudice, party-spirit, and evil affections, we may all come to a happy agreement in the same truth."*

On these extracts, which are in the general strain of the sermon, it may not be unseasonable to remark:

1. That the reformed churches, Episcopal and non-episcopal, had no scruple, in those days,

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prejudices are sometimes associated with them. There is no help for it. Such is sinful human nature, and we must take it as we find it.

* ——Illud totis viribus urgere, illud unum inculcare, ut receptæ hactenus fidei communique et vestræ et aliarum ecclesiarum confessioni adhærere usque velitis omnes. Quod si feceritis, O felicem Belgicam! O intemeratam Christi sponsam! O Rempublicam florentissimam!——Illud vero ut jam tandem fiat, φιλοτιμεισθε ἡσυχαζειν. Fratres sumus; simus et collegæ. Quid nobis cum illo infami Remonstrantium, Contra-Remonstrantium, Calvinianorum, Arminianorum titulo? Christiani sumus, simus et ισοψυχοι. Unum corpus sumus, simus et unanimes. Per tremendum illud omnipotentis Dei nomen—per pium blandumque communis matris nostræ gremium; per vestras ipsorum animas; perque sanctissima Jesu Christi Servatoris nostri viscera, pacem ambite fratres, pacem inite: et ita vos componite, ut, seposito omni præjudicio, partiumque studio ac malo affectu, in eadem omnes veritate feliciter conspiremus.

Ib, Sess. XVI.

of joining with each other in acts of publick worship, according to their respective usages. Much less did any of them look upon any other as not being true churches, and upon their ministry and ordinances as unlawful and invalid. Such a notion concerning churches without Episcopal order and ordination, had not yet infected the church of *England*, and curdled in her breasts the milk of Christian kindness. Her representatives at *Dordt*, explicitly call the ministers of the Dutch church, "beloved brethren and *fellow-ministers*."*

2. The views and feelings expressed by Dr. Hall corresponded entirely with those of the whole Synod; for they call his discourse "most learned and accurate," and gave him publick thanks for it.† So that, considering how the Synod was constituted, it may be taken an *official expression of the views and feelings of reformed Europe*. And when this most venerable assembly, inferiour in learning, talent, holiness, and dignity, to none that had preceded it since the great council of *Nice*, was about breaking up; the members mutually gave each other the "right hand of brotherly communion,"‡ and parted with embracings and tears. Here was the most so-

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* Ib. *part* 2. p. 224. † Ib. *part* 1. p. 38. ‡ Ib. *part* 2. p. 352.

lemn formula, (the right hand of fellowship) known in the church of God for receiving and acknowledging each other as brethren in Christ and in the gospel of Christ—the most sacred pledge of Christian and ministerial communion. Can a shadow of doubt remain after the testimony of such a fact? Is it a tolerable question, whether such men, or the ministers and members of the churches they represented, would sit down together at the Lord's table?

As to the church of *Holland*, it is well known, that she practised the liberal communion of which those illustrious deputies sanctioned the principle, and set an example. For her members before this communicated with the BROWNISTS, the English independents who fled from ecclesiastical oppression in their own country; although, by a singular inconsistency, the Brownist teachers would not consent to reciprocate the communion any further than in prayer and hearing the word: and that in the face of their own protestation wherein they say, "We account the reformed churches as true and genuine; *We profess communion with them in the sacred things of God; and, as much as in us lies, we cultivate it.*"* An inconsistency which, it is heartily to be wished, had stood alone; and, deeply to be regretted, has been kept in countenance by the professions and practice of later days: but which, at that time, was equalled only by the inconsistency of the government of England, in supporting, cherishing, comforting, honouring the non-episcopal churches abroad; and discouraging, harrassing, crushing the very same sort of churches at home.

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* Ecclesias reformatas pro veris et genuinis habemus; cum iisdem in sacris Dei communionem profitemur; et, quantum in nobis est, co-

The church of *Holland* was not only ready to communicate in the sacraments with the English dissenters, as well as with the establishment, but actually appointed one of the former, the learned and excellent Dr. William Ames, a professor of theology in the university of *Franeker.* The same honour proffered thirty years after, i.e. in 1651, to that holy man of God, Samuel Rutherford, of St. *Andrews* in *Scotland*, when she invited him to the professor's chair in the city of *Utrecht.*[*] In fact, the churches of *Holland* and *Scotland*, like the reformed churches on the continent, considered and treated each other as parts of a common whole; and furnished, by their connexion and intercourse, as they had opportu-

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timus.—Robinson's declaration in Neals' *history of the* Puritans. Vol. I. 437, 438. 4to. 1754.

[*] Crookshank's *History of the Church of* Scotland. Vol. I. p. 116. Lond. 1749. 8vo.

nity, a sample of that catholick communion to which the obligation is so clearly asserted in their confessions.

The aspect of the British churches was much less inviting. Even in the early part of the reign of ELIZABETH, untender, not to say violent, measures were adopted toward those who had conscientious objections to some observances in the establishment. But still the great Protestant principle of communion was not renounced ; it was not the *nature*, but the *application* of that principle, which produced so much scruple on one side, and so much oppression on the other. With all their coercive zeal toward their own dissentients, neither the civil nor ecclesiastical government of England thought of denying the lawfulness and the duty of communion between the Protestant churches, notwithstanding their variations from each other in smaller things. This was sufficiently manifest, as has been noticed, by their conduct relative to the Synod of *Dordt*. Their errour lay in making matter of compulsion toward their own people, what was matter of forbearance toward all others—in supposing that certain diversities found, by experience, to be innocent on the continent, must necessarily be criminal, if not fatal, in *England*. And they carried so far their passion for *unity*, as to destroy it by indiscreet means of enforcing it. All this was an abuse, gross indeed, but still an *abuse* of a sound and salutary principle. It was reserved for the times, the temper, and the influence of bishop Laud, to reject the principle itself. That able and intrepid, but fierce and unpitying prelate, set himself to pervert the faith of the church of England; to break off her connexion with foreign Protestants; to corrupt her worship by assimilating it, in every possible manner, with the Popish ritual; and, by dint of power, to effect an external uniformity over the island, at the expense of producing real division, bitter feuds, publick weakness, and private misery. The very next year after his elevation to the see of Canterbury, (1634,) Lord *Scudamore*, instead of going to the Protestant church at *Charenton*, as had been the previous practice of the English ambassadors at the French courts, "furnished his chapel after the new fashion," (*Laud's*) "with candles upon the altar, &c.; and took care to publish, upon all occasions, that *the church of* England *looked not on the Huguenots as a part of their communion.*"*

This was the first instance in which one of the reformed churches openly renounced the fellowship of another. It was a melancholy deed, and a melancholy day. The alarm which it created among foreign Protestants in England, and the indignation which it excited on the continent, proved how well established had been the doctrine of Protestant communion, and how precious it was in the eyes of Protestant churches. By that fatal act, *England* forfeited her pre-eminence as the " bulwark of the reformation," and became an object of disgust to the foreign churches; insomuch, that in her subsequent tribulations, she could scarcely command their pity: whereas, before this infatuated act of selfishness and schism, she held the first rank in their respect and affection.

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* Lord Clarendon, as cited by Neal. Vol. I. 582.

To those who are acquainted with the history of this disastrous period, it would be superfluous to detail the mercies of *Laud*, and the mysteries of the *Star-chamber*. To those who have not such an acquaintance, our limits do not allow us to present even an imperfect sketch: and perhaps the nature of this volume forbids the attempt. Suffice it to observe, that the contests in the church of England between the high-handed conformists and their demurring brethren, furnished proof, and not refutation, of the doctrine here advanced in favour of catholic communion. No whim, nor abuse, nor corruption, which they were not required to *approve*, severed the Puritans from the Established Church. They grieved, they mourned, they expostulated, about things which afflicted their consciences; but they thought not of separation. Had they been allowed to exonerate themselves from the charge of countenancing what, in all sincerity, they disallowed; or, had they not been commanded to belie their conviction by an explicit approbation of what they abhorred, the name of dissenters from the church of England had never been known. Un-episcopal in their judgment they certainly were; as were all the continental Protestants, and all the fathers of the British reformation. They disliked, they loathed, certain exteriour observances; but still, had they been permitted to dislike and to loathe without exciting public disturbance—had they not been required to deny what they believed to be truth, and to profess what they believed to be falsehood—had not the price of their peace in the establishment been rated so high as the perjury of their souls before God, they had never been separated from the church of England. As it was, they did not *retire*, they were *driven* from her bosom: and they have thus left upon record their testimony of martyrdom to the sacredness of that communion which belongs to the church of God, and to the criminality of dividing it upon slight pretexts. The same thing may be said of the rent begun in 1732, in the church of *Scotland.* The Seceders did not voluntarily *withdraw*, they were *expelled.* Had the Commission of the General Assembly, and the General Assembly itself known their own interests—had they listened more to the counsels of Christian peace than to the pride of a secular establishment, the church of Scotland had been "one and indivisible." But, like England with her *Laud* and her *Star-chamber*, she chose to be ferocious: and she broke the golden chain of her unity, perhaps never to be repaired till those days of the "Son of man" which, according to his word, we confidently expect. In the mean time has happened what the nature of human passions might forewarn us to anticipate: grievance has been accumulated upon grievance, and complaint upon complaint. The point of honour with the devotees of the establishment is to heap contempt on the separatists; and, with the devotees of separation, to degrade the establishment. And thus, while "high church," on both sides of the *Tweed*, deals out its proscriptions more in the spirit of the world than in the bowels of Christ, the compliment is returned by their antagonists with hearty good will. Many things are *now* alleged to *justify* dissent from the church of *England*, and secession from the church of *Scotland*; which, we *know*, were not among the original causes of disunion. And so it is with *all* parties after their disagreement has become inveterate. This is humiliating, but it is true. And the arm of TRUTH must not be unnerved, light her blow where it may.

To return. The church of England continued in this uncomfortable state. Power persecuting right, and right remonstrating to power—the secular hierarchy commanding, and the scriptural conscience disobeying and suffering, till that memorable epoch in the reign of CHARLES I.—the meeting of the Assembly of divines at *Westminster*, in 1643.

This Assembly was called for the express purpose of reforming more perfectly "the discipline, liturgy, and government of the church," so that "such a government might be settled in the church as should be most agreeable to God's holy word, and most apt to procure and preserve the peace of the church at home, and nearer agreement with the church of *Scotland*, and other reformed churches abroad."

The assembly was originally composed of Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Independents; with commissioners, both lay and clerical, from the church of Scotland. The Episcopal divines withdrew at an early period of their discussions, viz. before the introduction of the "*Solemn league and covenant*,"* and the number of Independents was but small;† so that the business of the assembly was managed principally by the Presbyterians.

On the form of church-government there was much difference of judgment, long and warm debate, and great embarrassment.

In the body of Christian *doctrine* there was almost a perfect harmony. A few members objected to "some expressions relating to *reprobation*, to *the imputation of the active as well as passive obedience of Christ*; and to several passages in the chapters of *liberty of conscience, and church discipline*; but the *confession*, as far as it related to *articles of faith*, passed the Assembly and Parliament by a very great majority;" and was, without exception, adopted by the church of Scotland.‡ The Independents, when they formed themselves into a separate body, thirteen years afterwards, i. e. in 1658, published a confession of faith, called the *Savoy confession*, which, for substance, is the same as the Assembly's. "They have omitted all those chapters in the

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* Neale, II. 68. † Neale says, "not above six" Vol. II. p. 44.
‡ Ib. 258.

Assembly's confession which relate to discipline; as the 30th and 31st, with part of the 20th and 24th, relating to *the power of Synods, councils, church censures, marriage and divorce, and the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion.*" But "upon the whole, the difference between these two confessions in point of doctrine is so small, that the modern Independents have, in a manner, laid aside the use of it," (their own,) "in their families, and agreed with the Presbyterians in the use of the Assembly's catechism."*

In the result, therefore, of the Westminster Assembly's deliberation—an assembly not surpassed even by the Synod of *Dordt*, or the council of *Nice*—we have the doctrinal judgment of at least the *English* Presbyterians and Independents, and of the whole church of *Scotland*. That judgment in the article of church-communion is the more important, as the churches immediately concerned in the present inquiry have sprung from them; have received, all of them the doctrine, many of them the government, discipline, and worship, settled by that most venerable assembly. So that when we have the doctrine of the Westminster confession of faith on the article of communion, we have the faith avowed at this moment of the church of Scotland—of both branches of the secession in that country and Ireland—of the Reformed Presbytery; of the Synod of Relief in Scotland—of a large body of English Independents—and of all, or nearly all, the American churches which have descended from them: that is, we have the professed faith of all the Presbyterian churches in *Scotland*, *Ireland*, and *America* (the *Associate Reformed Church* being one,)—and of the body of English and American Independents. When we shall have settled the doctrine of communion, as taught in the Westminster confession, we shall also have settled the principle which these churches, at least the Presbyterian part of them, have solemnly adopted and promised to observe, as the rule of their ecclesiastical conduct. With this general clue let us go to the "Confession of faith." The 26th chapter is entitled:

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* Ib. 507.

"*Of* COMMUNION OF SAINTS:"

the doctrine concerning which it lays down in the following terms:

"All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory. And, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, publick and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man."

"II. Saints by profession are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification: as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

This latter section describes, apparently, the communion which ought to subsist between professed Christians in their relation to each other as visible members of the church of God; asserting their joint title to, and interest in, all the privileges of his house, and their duty to participate therein with each other, as they have opportunity, upon the single ground of their being followers of the Lord Jesus.

Let us view it a little more closely.

The parties are "saints by profession:" i. e. those who make a credible profession of religion —whom, according to the rules of scriptural judgment, we are to acknowledge as fellow-christians.

The communion which they are to cherish with each other is defined in its nature, its extent, and in the principle of its application. Its *nature* is *threefold.* It consists:

1. In *social worship.*

They are *partners* with each other in all that is comprehended under "the worship of God:" i. e. his instituted ordinances in his church.

This partnership is to be *avowed and expressed* by open acts of mutual recognition—they are "*to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God.*"

Their recognition of each other is not a matter of choice or discretion, which they may do, or omit, as they please. It is a *duty* which they are not at liberty to forego—an imperative obligation upon their consciences—they are "*bound*" to maintain this communion.

2. In acts of *religious good-will,* which, though they fall not directly under the "worship of God," are yet "such spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification."

3. "In relieving each other in *outward* things according to their several abilities and necessities."

As to the *extent* of this communion in all its branches—it is to embrace Christians as such:

1. Of every denomination—even "all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

2. Of every country and clime—even all who "in every place" call upon him.

The application of this doctrine is to be regulated by providential occurrences:—"as God offereth opportunity." When you do not force an occasion by the neglect of more pressing duties; but when in his providence he fairly puts it in your way, you are not to shun, but thankfully to accept such an "opportunity" of testifying your love to his people by joining with them in the ordinances dispensed among them, or welcoming them to the ordinances dispensed among yourselves.

This seems to be a simple interpretation of the article before us. Such an one as a man of plain sense and upright heart, without any previous bias, and regarding only the terms in which it is couched, would put upon it. And if such is, indeed, its meaning, there can be no further debate. The churches concerned have decided, by their own publick confession, in favour of a communion as catholick and generous as that of the Apostolick and Primitive and Protestant ages: and nothing remains for them but to show, by their example, that they believe their own doctrine—that the profession which they are in the habit of making to God and to man, is a fair exhibition of their principles.

But the point will not be so easily yielded. The respected brethren and venerable fathers with whom this plea remonstrates, make a distinction which they think clears them from the charge of inconsistency, and conciliates their contracted communion with their adherence to the Westminster confession. They distinguish between *church-communion* and the *communion of saints*; or, as they sometimes express it, *Christian communion*. By the first, viz. *church-communion*, they understand communion with a church in her social character, as organized under a particular form of doctrine, government, and worship. By the second, viz. the *communion of saints* or *Christian communion*, they understand that communion which subsists between Christians as individuals simply, without reference to their *church-connexion* at all. And some have even limited this communion, at least in the extent of the confession in the article cited above, to "ministering with our substance, by *communications* of it to supply the necessities of the saints, or, in doing other offices of kindness:" which they suppose, "is fully evident from the scriptures quoted by the venerable assembly at Westminster in support of that article."* The confession is therefore considered not as treating of communion with a church at all; but simply of that brotherly love which should adorn the *private* intercourse of those who are called by the name of Christ.

If the distinction here stated, and *as* stated, be sound, and the interpretation depending upon it genuine, the Westminster confession must doubtless be expunged from our roll of witnesses. But if it should prove to be altogether untenable, and the interpretation founded upon it to be in direct repugnance to the article which it is employed to explain, the refuge of our opposing brethren will be swept away.

In combatting their distinction, which he holds to be erroneous and hurtful, the authour trusts to their candour for acquitting him from the imputation of disrespect. He feels both regret and grief at the necessity imposed on him, of differing from brethren whom he esteems and loves, with whom he has taken, and hopes yet to take "sweet counsel together, and to go to the house of God in company"—from fathers whose shoe's latchet he is scarce worthy to unloose—from churches which have been and are valiant for the truth, and which have distinguished themselves for their fidelity to the testimony of Jesus. It was in their own school, by imbibing their own spirit, that he first learned to "call no man master upon earth;" and he would not pay them so miserable a compliment as to refrain from pointing out their mistake, from an unmanly fear of coming short in the duties of tenderness and respect. The weight of their names, the strength of their habits, and the importance which they attach to the distinction before us, not only justify, but demand a close and full investigation.

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* RE-EXHIBITION OF THE TESTIMONY *by the* (Burgher) ASSOCIATE SYNOD, 1778. Page 178, note *.

It must strike every thinking reader as somewhat extraordinary, that the communion of a church made up of visible saints—of Christians, should not be the communion of saints, nor Christian communion! If the communion which, in publick worship, saints hold with saints, as such, is not "communion of saints"—which Christians there hold with Christians, is not "Christian communion," what is it? Do the *Christians* disappear when the *church* assembles? Do the saints become unsainted the moment they sit down at the Lord's table; so that their communion in his body and blood is not the communion of saints, nor at all signified by that expression? To say the least, here is a smack of *Babel:* a strange confusion of human speech! the words certainly do not sound so: nor is it conceivable how such a construction of them should suggest itself to any man's mind, unless he had been reduced to great straits by the pressure of some importunate argument; and could fall upon no other means to extricate himself.

Nor is it less extraordinary, that an instrument prepared, like the confession of faith, with the most cautious deliberation; an instrument remarkable, above all other uninspired compositions, for denseness and perspicuity; for precision and amplitude, should treat professedly of the church of God; of her ministry, her ordinances, her worship—and contain not one syllable on that momentous topic, her communion! Should be explicit and minute on the *private* communion of her members, and silent as death about their *publick* fellowship! That the very framers of this instrument should write letters full of affection to foreign Protestant churches; and should avoid, *studiously* avoid, in their doctrine concerning the catholick church, every thing which might inform their correspondents in what light they were to be viewed—whether as fellow-communicants in their Christian privileges, or as a profane refuse of heathen men and publicans! It is absolutely incredible! Yet all this have they done, or neglected to do, if the chapter on the "communion of saints," is rightly interpreted of *Christian*, to the exclusion of *church*-communion. Such an idea is the more inadmissible, as *all* the churches on both sides of the Atlantic, organized under the Westminster confession, are in the same predicament. There is not one of them whose authentick, standard confession of their faith respecting the church of God, so much as tells the other churches whether they even own them as brethren in the Lord or not! There is something wrong here: and it will be of no small service to the character of the churches of the Westminster confession, to set it right. For this end it will be proper,

1. To ascertain the meaning of the phrase, "*Communion of saints.*"

2. To examine the internal evidence of the confession itself, coupled with the larger and shorter Catechisms, which are only different forms of the same body of general doctrine.

3. To compare these results with the views of church-communion which are known to have prevailed about the period of which the Westminster Assembly is the most conspicuous incident.

1. For ascertaining the meaning of the phrase "communion of saints," let it be remembered, that at the time of forming the Westminster confession it had been of long use in the church of

God: so that it had become familiar as a technical expression; and may, therefore, be taken only in its known and established sense. It passed into the language of the churches from that brief summary of Christian doctrine, called the "Apostles' creed." And as the Westminster divines have annexed that summary to their own more enlarged work, they have taught us that they understood the phrase "communion of saints" in the sense which is affixed to it by the Apostles' creed, and which had been received without contradiction or variance down to their own day.

That little compend was current in the Christian world without the clause "communion of saints," until the end of the fourth, or beginning of the fifth century. It was gradually, but very cautiously and sparingly, enlarged, as occasion required. And it was an occasion of some deep and universal interest which could avail for introducing a new clause into a formula of such high authority, such boundless adoption, and such extreme brevity. Some point of primary magnitude in the faith of the whole Christian world, and which it was deemed necessary to maintain by a corresponding testimony, must have been assailed—some errour calculated to alarm the church "from the one end of heaven even to the other end of heaven," must have been broached, to cause the insertion of a new member into that miniature body of doctrine which contained the radical faith of all believers from the rising to the setting sun. What was it? Amidst all the heresies which infested the church for four hundred years, had any one denied the obligation upon Christians in their private capacity to cultivate brotherly kindness?—to intermingle their Christian affections?—to abound in deeds of munificence for each other's comfort, and for the furtherance of the gospel?* Was there any doubt upon this head? And can it be imagined that the publick creed, which Christians held sacred, was enlarged for the purpose of asserting what nobody disputed? This will not bear inquiry.

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* When the coldness and niggardliness of Christians among us toward the most glorious objects of pious effort, are compared with the ardour and bounty of the primitive believers, one cannot help smiling, though in bitterness, at CYPRIAN'S complaint, that in his day, A. D. 251, Christians had so far *degenerated* from their first love, as not to give the TENTH *part of their substance* to religious uses!!! Nunc, says he, de patrimonio nec *decimas* damus!! (*De unit: eccles*: p. 120.) The writer knows a congregation of very decent professors, in a very snug way of living, who some years since gave, *among them* ALL, fifty dollars to a seminary out of which the word of the gospel is expected to go forth to feed their own children with the "bread of God;" and the last account of them is, that "they have not yet *got over* this Herculean exertion!" He mourns to add, that there are others, and they not poor, who give *nothing*, or next to nothing; and yet claim a full and even preponderating share of the fruits for which they have not laboured, and which have been raised by men more indigent than themselves. O Saviour, do these people love *thee?* Shame, where is thy blush!

The troubles created by the DONATISTS began near the commencement of the fourth century, and raged with violence for a long series of years. Their schism, as was shown above, consisted precisely in their breaking off from the Catholick church, and refusing to hold communion with churches that were not of their own body. Prior to this event the clause under discussion was not in the Apostles' creed; nor is it to be found in any of the editions of that instrument which have been preserved in writings of an earlier date. The creed simply said, "*I believe in the Holy Catholick church, the forgiveness of sins*, &c. But *after* the schism of the Donatists, in the time of AUGUSTIN their great antagonist, it appears with "*the communion of saints*," between these two clauses; and reads, "*I believe in the Holy Catholick church, the* COMMUNION OF SAINTS, *the forgiveness of sins*," &c.

The fact is conclusive. We have here the reason and origin of the phrase. It was to maintain the principle of the union and communion of the Catholick church, against the schismatical doctrine and conduct of the Donatists; and so it is paraphrased by its learned historian and commentator, *Sir* PETER KING.

"The term *Saints*," says he, "being explained, it will not be difficult to apprehend the meaning of the other term *Communion*; which naturally appears to be this; that there is, and ought to be, a mutual intercourse and society, fellowship and communion, in all usual and regular ways, between the several respective churches and congregations of Christians and believers, whereby they declare unto the whole world, that although both necessity and convenience oblige them to assemble in distinct places, and compose different societies, yet, nevertheless, they are all members of one and the same body of which *Jesus Christ* is the head: that they are all guided by the same spirit, communicate in the same institutions, and are governed by the same general rules; so that whatsoever is regularly performed and determined in one congregation, is assented to by all others; and *whosoever is received to communion in one church, is freely admitted into any other.*" *

It is, therefore, clear that the phrase "communion of saints," was, originally, so far from signifying what is now called "*Christian* communion" in opposition to "*church*-communion," that it signified exactly, or nearly, the reverse: i. e. it not only comprehended, but strictly and properly expressed, and was put into the creed for the very purpose of expressing, *church-communion.* And although it is couched in terms which fairly embrace the whole fellowship of believers, so as to allow that latitude of exposition which it receives in the Westminster confession; yet its immediate, primary, and chief, if not sole intention, was to assert the obligation upon *all the churches* of God throughout the world, to commune with each other in the most solemn offices of religion, as his providence should furnish them with opportunities.

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* KING's *Critical History of the Apostles' Creed. p.* 342, 343, *London.* 1719. 8vo.

In this reigning sense was it handed down to posterity, and understood at the reformation more than eleven centuries after its adoption.

The HELVETIC *confession*

Explains the church to be "a company of believers called or collected out of the world; adding, "I mean a communion of all the saints; viz. of them who really know the true God, in Christ the Saviour, by his word and spirit, who worship him aright; finally, who by faith participate in all the benefits which are freely offered to them through Christ. All these are citizens of one city, living under the same Lord, and the same laws, in the same participation of all good things. For so the Apostle has called them; (fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God:) Bestowing the appellation of '*saints*' upon believers on earth, "who are sanctified by the blood of the Son of God. Eph. 2. 1. Cor. 6. *Of whom is by all means to be understood* that article of the creed, I believe *in the Holy Catholic church*, THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS."*

Here the "communion of saints" is pronounced to be the same, as the "holy catholick church;" so that whatever the communion is, it is *church*-communion. Nor can this be evaded by urging that the confession has restricted the definition of the church to true believers. It has so: but then it is of believers as they *profess* Christ, and are *openly* on his side, forming, throughout the world, one great society organized under his laws. It considers real Christians to be, strictly speaking, the church. But men cannot see into each other's hearts. There is no other way of our knowing who are believers but by the *profession* of their faith with a corresponding behaviour. The confession proceeds upon this fundamental rule of society, civil and sacred, that, before the tribunal of human judgment, a man *is* what he *appears* to be. It speaks, therefore, of the church of believers, as indicated by their visible profession, walk, and order, in the gospel. In no other way can she be known as a *militant* church—in no other way can tares be mixed with her wheat—in no other way can she have "a great many *particular* churches upon earth, all referrible to the true Catholick church"—in no other way could she "have her *institutions*, and be regulated in one form among the Patriarchs before the law—in another, by the law under Moses—and in a third, by Christ through the gospel;" all which this same article most fully maintains.

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* Quando autem Deus ab initio salvos voluit fieri homines, et ad agnitionem veritatis venire, oportet omnino semper fuisse, nunc esse, et ad finem seculi futuram esse Ecclesiam: i. e. e mundo evocatum vel collectum cœtum fidelium; Sanctorum, inquam, omnium communionem; eorum videlicet, qui Deum verum in Christo Servatore per verbum et Spiritum Sanctum vere colunt; denique omnibus bonis per Christum gratuito oblatis fide participant. Sunt isti omnes unius civitatis cives, viventes sub eodem Domino, sub iisdem legibus, in eadem omnium bonorum participatione. Sic enim hos concives Sanctorum et domesticos Dei appellavit Apostolus: Sanctos appellans fideles in terris, sanguine Filii Dei sanctificatos. Eph. 2. 1. Cor. 6. De quibus omnino intelligendus est symboli articulus, "Credo sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam, sanctorum communionem."

AP. SYNTAG. CONF. *part* 1. p. 50.

To the same purport, at a still earlier period, speaks

The CONFESSION *of* BASIL:

"We believe in the holy Christian church, i. e. the *communion of saints;* the congregation of the faithful in spirit, which is holy, and the spouse of Christ. In which all those are citizens who confess that JESUS is the CHRIST, the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; and who demonstrate that faith of theirs by works of love."*

The STRASBURG CONFESSION:

"Since the Saviour reigns truly, in these," (the children of God) "they are properly called 'his church,' and, '*the* COMMUNION,' i. e. the SOCIETY of saints, as the term 'church' is explained in the Apostles' creed." †

The BOHŒMIC CONFESSION:

"We are most thoroughly persuaded, by clear indications from the word of God, that our ministers who do not overleap the bounds of evangelical doctrine, are addicted to no heresies; but are true ministers of Christ, and in Christ's stead; and are to be obeyed, by the commandment of truth itself. Wherefore it were most unlawful to withhold the *communion of saints* with them; especially as we are bound thereto by this very article of the apostles' creed; *I believe in the holy Catholick church, the communion of saints.*"*

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* Credimus sanctam Christianam Ecclesiam, id est, communionem sanctorum, congregationem fidelium in spiritu, quæ sancta et sponsa Christi est: In qua omnes illi cives sunt qui confitentur JESUM esse CHRISTUM, agnum Dei tollentem peccata mundi; atque eandem fidem per opera charitatis demonstrant. IB. p. 94.

† In his cum vere regnet Servator, proprie ejus ecclesia et sanctorum κοινωνία, id est societas; ut in symbolo Apostolorum vocabulum "Ecclesiæ" expositum est, nominantur. IB. p. 238.

Calvin,

Who is more remarkable for nothing than for his decision—who never trims, nor shuffles, nor thinks by halves, has founded his whole doctrine of *church-communion* upon this very article. And in his exposition of the words "communion of saints" thus expresses himself.

"This article of the creed has also some respect to the external church; that every one of us may keep himself in brotherly concord with all the children of God; may yield to the church her just authority; in a word, may conduct himself as a sheep of the flock. And, therefore, there is added, the COMMUNION OF SAINTS—because it excellently expresses the quality of the *church*: as if it had been said, the saints are gathered into the fellowship of Christ upon this condition, that they mutually communicate to each other all the good things which God bestows upon them. By which, however, the diversity of his favours is not destroyed; as we know that the gifts of the Spirit are variously distributed; nor is that political order plucked up, by which every one is at liberty to possess his own wealth in his private right; as it is necessary, for the sake of preserving peace among men, that the control of property should be distinct and independent. But there is asserted such a community as *Luke* describes, that *the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul;* and *Paul,* when he exhorts the *Ephesians* to be *one body and one spirit, as they are called in one hope.* For it cannot be, if they are truly persuaded that God is their common father, and Christ their common head, but that joined together in brotherly love, they will most freely interchange their privileges."*

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* Persuasissimum itaque nobis est, hoc ipsum verbo Dei ut Lydio lapide indicante, sacerdotes nostros, cum septa ipsa Evangelicæ doctrinæ non transiliant, nullos hæresibus addictos, sed ministros Christi ac veros vicarios esse; quibus parendum esse ipsa veritas monet dictatque. Quo certe minus fas est, ut cum his *sanctorum communio* detrectetur haberi; præsertim astringente nos ad hoc ipso Symboli Apostolici articulo, "Credo sanctam ecclesiam, Sanctorum communionem.

PRÆF. IN CONF. BOHEM. *Ib.* part 2 p. 234.

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* Quanquam articulus Symboli ad externam quoque Ecclesiam aliquatenus pertinet; ut se quisque nostrûm in fraterno consensu cum omnibus Dei filiis contineat—Ecclesiæ deferat quam meretur auctoritatem—denique se ita gerat ut ovis ex grege. Atque ideo adjungitur SANCTORUM COMMUNICATIO: quæ particula, licet a veteribus fere prætermissa sit, non tamen negligenda est, quia Ecclesiæ qualitatem optime exprimit. Quasi dictum esset, hac lege aggregari Sanctos in societatem Christi, ut quæcunque in eos beneficia in eos confert inter se mutuo communicent. Quo tamen non tollitur gratiarum diversitas; sicuti scimus varie distribui Spiritus dona: neque etiam convellitur ordo

And, to put the matter beyond all question, when he is shewing that "we are in no manner to depart from the communion of saints," he "refutes the errours of the *Novatians*, the *Anabaptists* and other *schismatical* and *idle-minded* men of the same stamp;" whose schism we know, consisted precisely in their refusing to hold communion with other churches than their own. This Calvin reprobates as a violation of the "communion of saints;" and considering the unparalleled acceptance of his work with the Reformed churches, his interpretation must be regarded as their common judgment. Other reformers speak in the same strain.

From the days of Calvin and the Reformation, to the Westminster Assembly in 1643, no alteration, on this point, appears to have occurred in the sense of the religious world. Take two or three proofs.

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politicus, quo suas cuique facultates privatim possidere licet; ut necesse est, pacis inter homines conservandæ causâ, rerum dominia inter ipsos propria et distincta esse. Sed asseritur communitas qualem Lucas describit, quod *multitudinis credentium esset cor unum et anima una:* et Paulus, quum hortatur Ephesios ut sint *unum corpus, unus spiritus, sicuti vocati sunt in una spe.* Neque enim fieri potest, si vere persuasi sunt Deum communem sibi omnibus patrem esse, et Christum commune caput, quin, fraterno inter se amore conjuncti, ultro citroque sua communicent.

INSTIT. Lib. iv. cap. i. § 3.

The 133d psalm beginning, *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* has been applied, time immemorial, to the harmony and love of Christians in their *church-communion.* It is so at the present day; and in several churches, *particularly in those which most strenuously support the distinction I am combatting,* is sung at the conclusion of Presbyterial and Synodical meetings. Now the Translators of the Bible have marked the contents of this psalm as displaying "*the benefits of the* COMMUNION OF SAINTS." Whether the application is correct or incorrect, makes no difference in the argument. For as it was current in the Christian world, the Translators, by their designation of the psalm, have shewn that, in their eyes, "church-communion," and "communion of saints," mean the same thing. They were forty-seven of the most learned Divines in England; and can hardly be supposed to have mistaken the publick sense of an expression so habitually repeated in the church service. They performed their work between 1606 and 1611.

Dr. JOHN DAVENANT, one of the English Divines at the Synod of *Dordt,* afterwards bishop of *Salisbury,* in a letter written about 1634, to JOHN DURÆUS, a Scotsman, celebrated for his endeavours to unite the Protestant churches, thus expresses himself. "The church of Rome alone has gone to such a high pitch of pride and madness as to thrust out from the "*communion of saints,*" and devote to hell, all the *churches* which refuse submission to the antichristian yoke of absolute and blind obedience."*

The most reverend and learned JAMES USHER, afterwards archbishop of *Armagh*, and one of the original members of the Westminster Assembly, preached a sacramental sermon in 1620, before the House of Commons, from 1 Cor. x. 17. *We, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.* In this sermon, he observes, "the Apostle maketh our partaking of the Lord's table to be a testimony not only of the union and communion which we have betwixt ourselves and with our Head, (which he doth in the express words which I have read,) but also of our disunion and separation from all idolatrous worship.

"The effect, therefore, of that which St. *Paul* in express terms here delivereth, is the *communion of saints;* which consisteth of two parts, the fellowship which they have with the *Body*, laid down in the beginning; and the fellowship which they have with the *Head*, laid down in the end of the verse." In expounding the first part, he not only mentions explicitly "both our baptism and our drinking of the Lord's cup," as belonging to the communion of saints, but handles the sin of schism, or "making a rent in the church of God," as a breach of this communion; and he exhorts Christians to "remember that as oft as we come unto the Lord's table, so oft do we enter into new bonds of peace, and tye ourselves with firmer knots of love together: this blessed communion being a sacred seal not only of the union which we have with our Head by *faith;* but also of our conjunction with the other members of the body" (the body of Christ,) by *love*."*

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* SENTENIA D. DAVENANTII, p. 6. Cant. 1640. 18mo.

RICHARD BAXTER, a holy man of God, of merited celebrity in the church, and contemporary with the Westminster assembly, has, in his treatise entitled *A Christian Directory*, a long chapter on the nature of church union and communion, which is thus headed, "*Directions for the union* AND COMMUNION *of* SAINTS*; and the avoiding unpeaceableness and* SCHISM."† His 6th direction is, "Make nothing necessary to the *unity of the church, or the* COMMUNION OF CHRISTIANS, which God hath not made necessary, or directed you to make so."* Here "church-communion," "communion of saints," and "communion of Christians," are evidently used by Mr. BAXTER as convertible terms; and it is equally evident that in using them thus indifferently, the one for the other, he speaks the language of the church in his day.

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* P. 2—9. *Lond.* 1631. 4to.

† Chap. viii. of said Treatise, Works, Vol. i. p. 590—608.

Furthermore. The Westminster confession of faith was substantially adopted by the churches of Connecticut assembled, by delegation, at *Saybrook*, September 9th, 1708. Under this very head, viz. *the communion of saints*, they have introduced the section we are now considering, with the following variation: "which communion, *though especially to be exercised by them in the relations wherein they stand, whether in families or* CHURCHES, *yet*, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."† Note, this "communion" is to be exercised by "saints" in their *church-capacity;* it is therefore *church-communion.*

The very same sense continued to be affixed to it long after, and that in the church of *Scotland;* from which all the parties embarked in this part of the discussion are derived. The great and good THOMAS BOSTON, who died in 1732, preached several sermons from 1 Cor. x. 17, which he afterwards reduced into a tract, entitled, "*The unity of the body of Christ, and the duty the members owe one to one another.*" His text is the same with USHER'S, quoted above, and so is his general mode of treating it; only he is much more minute and ample than the Irish prelate.

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* IB. p. 601. § 83.

† A CONFESSION OF FAITH. &c. chap. xxvii. p. 80. *New London*, 1710. 12mo.

The broad doctrinal proposition which he developes and applies, is this;

"DOCT. *There is a* COMMUNION OF SAINTS *among themselves, as being conjoined into one mystical body of Christ declared and avouched by* PARTAKERS OF THE SACRAMENTS, *especially that of the Lord's Supper, every one for themselves.*"* And again, he says that "the sacraments are the external bond of this *communion.*"† But sacramental communion is "church-communion;" therefore "church-communion" is "the communion of saints."

Nay, so firmly was this sense fixed in the church, that the excellent JOHN BROWN, of *Haddington*, even *after* he had been accustomed to the distinction both in theory and practice, (being, according to his worthy son and biographer, "*strict*, in *what is called church-communion;*" and "as to what is named the *communion of saints*, as distinguished from it, *liberal*,") even JOHN BROWN himself could not altogether rid himself of the received interpretation, but, forgetting the new distinction, thus expressed himself concerning the *Seceders*, who left their ministers in the established church of Scotland: "In vain you told them that their withdrawment was a breaking up of the *communion of saints*." And again, "They," the seceders, "challenged you to prove that Luther and Calvin's obedience to that command," the command of God, to leave the church of Rome, "amounted to a breaking up of the *communion of saints*."* But the communion from which Luther and Calvin withdrew was certainly *church-communion*; therefore, Mr. Brown himself being judge, "*church-communion*" is "communion of saints." And so he has inadvertently exploded his own distinction upon which he and his brethren were acting; and upon which the secession-churches, their American descendants and some others have, for the most part, continued to act to this hour.† Let us return.

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* WORKS, p. 291. *Edin.* 1767. fol. † IB. p. 294.

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* *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Secession*, p. 30, 31. Glasgow. 1780. 12mo.

† The distinction between "church-communion," and "communion of saints," so as to exclude the former from the latter, is called a *new*

It has now been proved that the principal, the reigning idea of the term "communion of saints," from its introduction into the Apostles' creed,

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one; and it is proved to be so by the preceding historical induction. The precise period of its adoption is not easy to fix. But as it never appeared, so far as the authour can ascertain, before the *complete* severance of the Seceders from the Scottish establishment, it seems to have been then introduced, and probably in the following manner. The Seceding brethren had been in the habit of holding communion with faithful ministers of the establishment, after the breach. But as contention between the two parties waxed hot, and they were perhaps taxed with inconsistency for holding communion with one part of a church, and refusing it with another, the intercourse became uncomfortable, and it was dropped. But here arose a new difficulty. The Seceders did not deny the church of Scotland to be a true church of Christ. Why then did they fly in the face of their own confession of faith, by declining all communion with her? Especially as they stoutly maintained that they never renounced the *church* of Scotland, but only a *corrupt party* in it. "Indeed! then one of two things: either expunge the article on that subject from your confession, or retread your steps." They could do neither. Their consciences would not permit the first, nor their feelings the second. What was to be done? If under "communion of saints," their confession treats of "church-communion," the contradiction is palpable: there is no escape. To avoid this distress, they seem to have hit upon the distinction as it has ever since been maintained; and had it been a sound one, it would effectually have served their purpose. For if the chapter on "communion of saints," lays down, in its second section, the doctrine of communion as it subsists between Christians in their private character merely, and not as it subsists between them in their public relations; i. e. if it does not lay down the doctrine of "church-communion," all was safe. The Seceders could very consistently adhere to the confession, and yet renounce communion with the church of Scotland. And thus, instead of being tossed backwards and forwards upon the horns of a cruel dilemma, they very fairly and adroitly slipped out between them. But if, as has been demonstrated, about the fifth century, through the whole of the Reformation from Popery, and of the subsequent period, down to the sitting of the Assembly at Westminster, was precisely that of "church-communion." Consequently the chapter which, in their confession, they have themselves entitled "*Of Communion of Saints,*" whatever else it may include, must be interpreted, according to the known and undisputed sense of the phrase, as treating expressly and officially of *Church-communion.*

2. Let us in the next place see what light is shed on this subject by the confession itself: so that the Westminster fathers may be their own expositors.

In the *Larger Catechism*, which is nothing but the confession reduced to question and answer, the "communion of saints" is said to be one of the "special privileges of the VISIBLE CHURCH."* But a privilege which belongs and is peculiar to her as the *visible church*, belongs and is peculiar to her in her *church-capacity.* This is so perfectly

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"communion of saints" includes "church-communion," it is worth looking after whether they are out of the reach of the horns yet. Let a remark be made without offence, as it is with unfeigned respect, that the Seceders missed their course when they rested their vindication upon any other ground than their *violent extrusion* from the church of Scotland. Should the writer have erred, the gain is their own; and they will pardon a mistake which, if it originates in ignorance, has at least the merit of frankness.

* QUEST. 63.

plain as to be little more than a tautology. And the communion which she enjoys in her church-capacity is, and can be, nothing else than *church-communion.* Therefore, the confession itself being judge, *church*-communion is the communion of *saints.*

Again: The "holy fellowship and communion," which "saints by profession are bound to maintain," is distributed into three parts—It is to be maintained

(1.) "In the worship of God."

(2.) "In other spiritual services."

(3.) "In relieving each other in outward things."

In regard to the first of these, let the Confession itself explain what is meant by "the worship of God."

"The reading of the scriptures with godly fear; the sound preaching, and conscionable hearing of the word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence; singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also the *due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments* instituted by Christ; are *all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God.*"*

For "worship of God," in the 26th chapter, substitute the *description* of that worship in the 25th; and we have the following result—

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* CONF. OF FAITH. hap. xxi. § 5.

"Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the publick preaching and hearing of the word—in the praises of God—and in the sacraments instituted by Christ."

If this is not "church-communion," what is? Yet this, according to our "good confession," belongs to the "communion of saints" by profession. Whatever else belongs to it, is referrible to the second or third of the particulars enumerated above, which, either one or both, comprehends all that has been or can be assigned to the "communion of saints," by those who oppose it to "church-communion."

A word more. The "communion of saints, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended," says the confession, "to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."*

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* This clause some restrict to the relief which Christians are to give each other in temporal matters! It is really a source of grief and humiliation, when good and sensible men lower themselves to an evasion which contradicts the first principles of interpretation, and the very references of the confession itself.

The chapter treats generally of "communion of saints." In the second paragraph it treats especially of the communion of "saints by profession." "Which communion," it says, "is to be extended," &c. The rules of grammar, as well as the laws of interpretation, require that this expression embrace the *whole* communion immediately before described; and cannot, without palpable unfairness, be restrained to a *single* specification.

The annexed scriptures do indeed speak of communion in temporal

It only remains

3. To compare the sense thus ascertained of the phrase "communion of saints," and of the chapter under that title in the Westminster confession of faith, with the views of church-communion which are known to have prevailed at and about the time when it was drawn up. Take such facts as the following.

There had been previously published, by the joint authority of the French and Dutch churches, a harmony of the Reformed confessions, digested under distinct heads: So that whatever is contained in the several confessions on any one subject was gathered into one chapter of the "harmony." And it was compiled for the very end of showing to the world the concord of Protestants, not excepting the Lutherans, in all matters which ought to form the bond of union and communion; and thus to repel the reproach of the Pa-

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things, as was most meet. But among them there is another reference to quotations under letter (*c*); which are alleged to prove that saints, "are obliged to the performance of such duties, *publick* and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the *inward* and outward man." One of them is 1 Thess. v. ii. "*Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.*" There is not a syllable about temporal things in the whole chapter: and surely no one will be so gross as to maintain that the mutual edification of believers is to be limited to their communion in temporal things—to what has been called by an expression facetiously severe—"communion in beef and cabbage."

pists, that they were separated from each other as much as from Rome. The preface concludes with the following apostrophe.

"Ye, therefore, most gracious Kings, Dukes, Earls, Marquises, most famous Barons and noble Lords; ye cities and commonwealths; ye most wise Pastors, Doctors, and to be short, all Christian People *professing the truth of the Gospel*, be present in souls and bodies, suffer not the poison of discord to spread any farther: but kill this hurtful serpent; and receive with a Christian mind, as is meet, and as is offered unto you, this most sure token and earnest of the everlasting friendship of the *French* and *Belgian* churches with you, offered to you in the face of the whole world; that we, being by a friendly league coupled together in Christ, may vanquish all Antichrists, and may sing that Hymn to the Lord our God, *Behold! how good and joyful a thing it is for brethren* to dwell together in unity!"

This book was translated into English and published in *London*, 1643, during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly; and not only so, but "allowed by publique authoritie." This "publique authoritie," without which no book might be printed, was lodged, by parliament, in June, 1643, for the department of Theology, in the hands of twelve divines, *seven of whom were mem-*

*bers of the Assembly.** Now it is hardly possible that such a committee should have licensed a book containing any thing materially at variance with an important Christian doctrine as received by themselves, when they formed part of a body of men who were about to assert that very doctrine as so received; and concerning which there does not appear to have been any difference among them.

The Assembly itself addressed an official letter, of November 30th, 1643, "To the BELGICK, FRENCH, HELVETIAN, *and other Reformed churches*;" whom they style "*Right Reverend and dearly beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ.*" "The inscription was, "*To the Reverend and learned pastors and elders of the classes and churches of* ZEALAND, *our much honoured brethren.*" This letter was subscribed not only by the Prolocutor, Assessors, and Scribes of the Assembly, but by all the commissioners from the church of Scotland; among whom were the ever famous and venerable SAMUEL RUTHERFORD, and GEORGE GILLESPIE. The letter is full of affection, and evinces peculiar anxiety for the good opinion, sympathy, and prayers of those churches. It states, in so many words, that the object of the

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* NEAL, Vol. II. p. 33. compared with p. 38—41.

Assembly was "to commend such a platform to our *Zerubbabels*" (the political governours) "as may be *most agreeable to God's sacred word*, NEAREST IN CONFORMITY TO THE BEST REFORMED CHURCHES, *and to establish* unity among ourselves."[*]

It is worthy of remark, that this letter, in its general address, specifies the *Belgick*, *French*, and *Helvetian* churches. Now these are the very churches which signalized themselves on the side of Catholick communion. The efforts of the *French* church were formerly noticed—the dispositions of the *Belgick* church in unison with the *French* were sufficiently manifested by the preface to the "Harmony" just quoted: And the *Helvetick* church had declared she should be guilty of a NEFARIOUS SCHISM, should she withdraw from communion with other churches of the Reformation. Yet these are the very churches to which the Westminster Assembly wished most nearly to conform the church in England: and in that wish they were one with the Scottish Commissioners. What shall we say to such a fact? Shall we say that the churches of *England* and *Scotland*, through the medium of their representatives at Westminster, trifled with the foreign churches! That they would not hold communion with those to whom they aimed at the "NEAREST *conformity?*" That they approached these churches with a lie in their mouth? and were guilty of such cursed hypocrisy, as to hail them as their "*dearly beloved—their much honoured brethren, in our Lord Jesus Christ,*" while at the very same moment they did not account their ministers to be worthy of appearing in their pulpits, nor their people of a seat with themselves at the table of the Lord? If not: if we recoil with horrour from such an imputation, the alternative is clear; they embraced, and were ready to exemplify, equally with the *Dutch*, *French*, and *Swiss* churches, the most liberal doctrine of communion with all, of every name, "who held the HEAD."

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[*] NEAL, Vol. II. p. 62, 65.

That such was then the true state of principle on the subject of communion—That it was so intended to be expressed, and was so understood when expressed, in the confession—that like the LUTHERS, and CALVINS, the MELANCTHONS, and BUCERS, and MARTYRS; like the *Dutch*, *French*, and *Swiss* churches, the Westminster Assembly, and the evangelical interest generally, was desirous of bottoming the communion of the church upon the broad foundation of the common faith, without regard to minor differences, is one of the most incontestible facts in ecclesiastical story.

Besides the proofs which have already been produced, let the following, out of a multitude, suffice.

(1.) The *English* ANABAPTISTS, in 1644, while the Westminster Assembly was sitting, published their confession of faith, which was strictly Calvinistical, excepting in the article of baptism; but on account of that difference they declined communion with the other reformed churches—a narrowness which greatly displeased and scandalized their Christian neighbours. For, according to NEAL, "The people of this persuasion were *more exposed to the publick resentments*, because they would hold communion with none but such as had been *dipped*."*

Two things are settled by this testimony.

First, That such sectarian communion was contrary to the feelings and habits of the Calvinistic churches at that time, or it would not have drawn upon the Anabaptists "the publick resentments." Thence,

Secondly, That in the judgment of these churches, neither difference in the government of the church, (the Anabaptists being Independents,) nor different views of the subjects and mode of baptism, are valid reasons for breaking up communion: and therefore that to refuse communion on their account is a worse violation of the law of Christ, than an errour in either or in both.

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* Vol. II. p. 112.

(2.) In 1654, five years after the termination of the Assembly, the provincial Synod of *London* published a book, entitled *Jus Divinum Ministerii Evangelici; or, The Divine Right of the Gospel Ministry.* The ministerial portion of a committee of that Synod at its first meeting, in 1647, were all members of the Westminster Assembly. One of them, Mr. JEREMIAH WHITAKER, had a chief hand in composing their work.* It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude, that they not only knew, but expressed, the prevailing sentiments of the Westminster divines. In their preface, speaking of the different sorts of men whom they had to deal with, they say, to use their own words,

"5. A fifth sort are our Reverend brethren of *New* and *Old England* of the CONGREGATIONAL WAY, who hold our churches to be true churches, and our ministers true ministers, though they differ from us in some lesser things. We have been necessitated to fall upon some things wherein they and we disagree, and have represented the reasons of our dissent. But yet we here profess, That this disagreement shall not hinder us from any Christian accord with them in affection: That we can willingly write upon our study-doors that motto which Mr. JEREMIAH BURROUGHES (who, a little before his death, did ambitiously endeavour after union amongst brethren, as some of us can testify) persuades all scholars unto,

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* NEAL, Vol. II. p. 261, compared with p. 466.

" *Opinionum varietas, et opinantium unitas non sunt* ἀσύϛατα."*

And that we shall be willing to entertain any sincere motion (as we have also formerly declared in our printed vindication) that shall further a happy accommodation between us.

"6. The last sort are the moderate, godly episcopal men; that hold ordination by presbyters to be lawful and valid; that a bishop and a presbyter are one and the same order of ministry—that are orthodox in doctrinal truths; and yet hold, that the government of the church by a perpetual moderator is most agreeable to scripture-pattern.

" Though herein we differ from them, yet we are *far from thinking that this difference should hinder a happy union between them and us.* Nay, we crave leave to profess to the world, that it will never, as we humbly conceive, be well with ENGLAND, *till there be an union endeavoured*

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* " Variety of opinions, and the unity of those who hold them, are not incompatible."

and effected between all those that are orthodox in doctrine, though differing among themselves in some circumstances about church-government.

"Memorable is the story of Bishop RIDLEY and Bishop HOOPER, two famous Martyrs, who, when they were out of prison, disagreed about certain ceremonial garments: but when they were put into prison they quickly and easily agreed together. *Adversity united them whom prosperity divided.*"*

(3.) The ministers and messengers of above one hundred congregational churches; among them that prince of modern divines, JOHN OWEN, and that very distinguished minister of Christ, JOHN HOWE, met, at the *Savoy*, October 12, 1658; and adopted substantially the doctrines of the Westminster confession; among the rest, the chapter on the "communion of saints." Now as this has been proved to comprehend "church-communion," it would never have received the approbation of a Synod of congregationalists if it had been supposed not to leave the question about external order among the matters of forbearance. Especially by a Synod who agreed, "that churches consisting of persons sound in the faith, and of good conversation, ought not to refuse communion with each other, *though they walk not in all things according to the same rule of*

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* Preface to *Jus divinum*, &c. Lond. 1654, 4to.

church-order; and if they judge other churches to be true churches, though less pure, they may receive to occasional communion such members of those churches as are credibly testified to be godly, and to live without offence."*

This agreement is the more worthy of notice on account of the influence which DR. OWEN is conceded to have possessed in the Synod. For there has not been, and cannot be a more strenuous advocate for enlarged communion than was that champion of the truth of JESUS, that terrour and torment of its vital corrupters—the Socinians. He maintains, that "such a *communion of Churches is* to be inquired after, as from which no true church of Christ *is*, or *can be*, excluded; in whose actual exercise they may and ought all to live; and whereby the general end of all churches in the edification of the Catholick church, may be attained. This is the true and only *Catholicism* of the church, which whoever departs from, or substitutes any thing else in the room of it, under that name, destroys its whole nature, and disturbs the whole *ecclesiastical harmony* that is of Christ's institution.

"However therefore, we plead for the *rights of particular churches*, yet our real controversy with most in the world is for the being, union, and communion of the *church Catholick*, which are variously perverted by many, separating it into parties, and confining it to rules, measures, and canons of their own finding out and establishment."*

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* NEAL, Vol. II. p. 508.

Again. "Had the Presbyterian government been settled, at the King's," (CHARLES the II.) restoration, by the encouragement and protection of the practice of it, without a *rigorous imposition* of every thing supposed by any to belong thereunto, or a mixture of human constitutions; if there had any appearance of a *schism* or *separation* continued between the parties, I do judge they would have been both to blame. For as it cannot be expected that all churches and all persons in them should agree in all principles and practices belonging unto church-order, nor was it so in the days of the Apostles, nor ever since, among any true churches of Christ: so all the *fundamental principles* of church-communion would have been so fixed and agreed upon between them, and all offences in worship so removed, as that it would have been a matter of no great *art* absolutely to unite them, or to maintain a firm communion among them, no more than in the days of the

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* OWEN's *True Nature of a Gospel Church.* Chap. XI. p. 237. 4to.

Apostles and the primitive times, in reference to the differences that were among churches in those days. For they allowed *distinct communion* upon distinct apprehensions of things belonging unto church-order or worship, all 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' If it shall be asked, then, why they did not formerly agree in the Assembly? I answer (1.) I was none of them, and cannot tell. (2.) They did agree, in my judgment, well enough; if they could have thought so: and farther I am not concerned in the difference."*

When Dr. OWEN admits that the Presbyterians and Independents "did not agree in the Assembly;" he means that they did not agree in a scheme of *publick ecclesiastical union.*†

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* OWEN'S *Inquiry into the Original,* &c. *of Evangelical Churches,* p. 347. 4to.

† The greater part of Christendom, in that age, had its head full of the idea of a *national* church in alliance with the state; and to that national church every body must conform. They therefore made a wide, but not a very scriptural, difference, between the treatment of those who favoured a particular form of church government at home, and those who favoured it abroad. What in the latter case was no obstacle to brotherly affection and intercourse, was, in the former, an unpardonable offence; fit to be argued with by civil pains and penalties. Thus, when ELIZABETH'S government was helping the Presbyterians of *France,* it was plaguing and persecuting the Presbyterians of *England.* And when the Presbyterians gained the ascendancy under CHARLES I. and OLIVER CROMWELL, nothing would do but all the world must be Presbyterians! and if the Theologians could not en-

That such was the real state of the case; that churches were kept asunder in England from mere party feeling, is roundly averred by one of their noblest men, Mr. JOHN HOWE. "I cannot forget," says he, "that sometime discoursing with some very noted persons about the business of union among Christians, it hath been freely granted me, that there was not so much as a principle left (among those the discourse had reference to) upon which to disagree; and yet the same fixed aversion to *union* continued as before; as a plain proof they were not *principles*, but *ends* we were to differ for."*

Let us, for a moment, hear this dignified advocate of Catholick fellowship plead its cause in his own nervous language.

"The more *truly Catholick* the communion of Christians is, it is the more *truly Christian*."†

"Nor is it mere *Peace* that is to be aimed at, but *free*, *mutual*, *Christian-communion* with such as do all *hold the Head Christ:*

"As peace between nations infers commerce; so among Christian churches, it ought to infer a

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lighten them in the expediency of such a measure, their lack of success must be supplied by that great master of syllogisms—the attorney general!

* WORKS, Vol. ii. p. 274. *Lond.* 1724. Fol.

† WORKS, Vol. ii. p. 338. *Lond.* 1724. Fol.

fellowship in acts of worship. I wish there were no cause to say this is declined when no pretence is left against it but false accusation; none but what must be supported by lying and calumny. Too many are busy at inventing of that which is no where to be found, that exists not in the nature of things, that they may have a colour for continued distance. And is not this to fly in the face of the authority under which we live, i. e. the ruling power of the kingdom of Christ, the Prince of Peace? 'Tis strange they are not ashamed to be called Christians; that they do not discard and abandon the name, that can allow themselves in such things! And 'tis here to be noted, that 'tis quite another thing, what is in itself *true* or *false*, *right* or *wrong;* and what is to be a *measure* or *boundary* of *Christian-communion.* Are we yet to learn, that Christian-communion is not amongst men that are perfect; but that are labouring under manifold imperfections, both in knowledge and holiness! And whatsoever mistake in judgment or obliquity in practice can consist with *holding the Head*, ought to consist also with being of the same Christian-communion; not the same *locally*, which is impossible; but the same occasionally, as any providence invites, at this or that time; and mentally, in heart and spirit, at all times. And to such peace (and consequently communion) we are *all called, in one body*, Col. iii. 15. We are expressly required to *receive one another*, (which cannot but mean into each others communion,) and *not to doubtful disputations*, Rom. xiv. 1. If any be thought to be weak, and thereupon to differ from us in some or other sentiments, if the difference consists with *holding the Head*, they are not, because they are weak, to be refused communion, but received; and received, *because the Lord has received them*, ver. 3. All that we should think Christ has received into his communion, we ought to receive into ours, Rom. xv. 7. Scriptures are so express to this purpose, that nothing can be more.

" And indeed, to make new boundaries of Christian-communion, is to make a new Christianity, and a *New Gospel*, and new rules of Christ's kingdom; and by which to distinguish subjects and rebels, and in effect to dethrone him, to rival him in his highest prerogative, viz. the establishing the terms of life and death for men living under his Gospel: It is to confine salvation, in the means of it, to such or such a party, such a church, arbitrarily distinguished from the rest of Christians; as if the privileges of his kingdom belonged to a party only; and that, for instance, the Lord's Table were to lose its name, and be no longer so called, but the table of this or that church, constituted by *rules of their own devising.* For if it be the Lord's Table, they are to keep it free, to be approached upon the Lord's terms, and not their own. In the mean time, what higher invasion can there be of Christ's rights? and since the Christian church became so overwise above what is written, in framing new doctrines and rules of worship, how miserably it hath languished, and been torn in pieces, they cannot be ignorant who have read any thing of the history of it."*

(4.) Such were the prevailing sentiment among the INDEPENDENTS. Let us now turn again to the PRESBYTERIANS; and see how the communion of the church appears under the irradiation of their "burning and shining lights."

Dr. MANTON protests against "the breaking off church-fellowship and communion, and making rents in the body of Christ because of difference of opinion in smaller matters, when we agree in the more weighty things. We are to *walk together as far as we are agreed. Phil.* iii. 16. and *externals* wherein we differ, lying far from *the heart of religion*, are nothing to *faith* and the *new creature*, wherein we agree. Gal. v. 6. and vi. 15.

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* HOWE's sermon, entitled "*Peace, God's blessing;*" Works, Vol. ii. p. 274.

The most weight should be pitched upon the *fundamentals* and *essentials* of religion: and where there is an agreement in these, private differences in *smaller matters* should not make us break off from one another."*

What these "smaller matters" are, which according to this admirable divine, should be no impediment to church-communion, his own words indicate; they are all things which cannot be ranked among the *essentials* of Christianity; whether they be matters of discipline or worship, of government or doctrine. That his language is not stretched, by this interpretation, beyond its true meaning, he has himself decided. "The *only lawful* grounds of separation," says he, "are *three*. 1. Intolerable persecution. 2. Damnable heresy. 3. Gross idolatry."† Every thing else is tolerable, and to be tolerated rather than burst the bands of church-fellowship.

Mr. RICHARD VINES, a member of the Assembly, and "a very learned and excellent divine,"‡ in his "*Treatise of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*," has a chapter upon the following question, "*Whether a godly man lawfully may or ought to*

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[*] MANTON *on* JUDE. p. 164. *Lond.* 1658. 4to.

[†] *Ib.* p. 496. In the margin he adds. "Under this head," (*Intolerable Persecution*) "is comprised *sinful excommunication.*" Let *them* mark *that* whom it concerns.

[‡] NEAL, Vol. ii. p. 86.

stand as a member of, and hold communion in the ordinances of God with, such a congregation as is mixt, as they call it; that is, where men visibly scandalous in life and conversation are mingled with the good in the participation and use of divine ordinances? Or, whether this mixture of heterogeneals do not pollute the ordinances and the communion to the godly, so as they are concerned to separate from such communion?"

The chapter is too long to be inserted entire: a specimen shall suffice.

"The *church may be corrupted* many ways in *doctrine*, *ordinances*, *worship*; and this I account the worst, because it is the corruption of the best, as the corruption of blood that runs through all the body, the poisoning of springs and rivers that run through a nation, is worse than a sore finger in the body, or a field of thistles in the nation. And there are degrees of this corruption, the doctrine in some remote points, *hay and stubble upon the foundation*; the worship in some rituals or rites of men's invention or custom. How many Scripture churches do ye find thus corrupted, and yet no separation of Christ from the Jewish church, nor any command to the godly of *Corinth*, (in the provinces of *Galatia*,) or those of *Asia*, in the *Revelation*; I must in such case *avoid the corruption, hold the communion: hear them in Mo-*

ses' chair, and yet beware of their leaven. But if corruptions invade the fundamentals, the foundation of doctrine is destroyed, the worship is become idolatrous, the leprosy is gotten into the walls and substance of the house: and which is above all, if the church impose such laws of their communion, as there is necessity of doing or approving things unlawful, or I am ruined or undone, then must I either break with God or men, and in that case, *come out of Babylon.* The churches of Protestants so separated from them of Rome; it was a necessary and just separation, the laws of their communion were ruinous to the soul, if we held it; to the body and life, if we held it not.

In sum then, and in conclusion of this part about doctrine and worship, which is but upon the by to the question. If a corrupt church, as *Israel* was, have their ordinances according *to the pattern in the Mount:* if it may be said, as Peter to Christ, *John* vi. 68. when some disciples separated themselves, *Thou hast the words of eternal life;* if, as Christ said in matters of worship, *John* iv. *Salvation is of the Jews;* then, as he said, *Whither shall we go?* Why do we separate? And yet I would not be mistaken by the simplest man, as if I accounted it separation, if a Christian hear a sermon, or receive the sacrament in another congregation. For he that takes a meal at another table, does not thereby separate from his own house. Or if a Christian, at liberty to dispose his dwelling, shall remove and sit down under more fruitful ordinances; I account not this secession a separation, no more than if being sickly, and having not health in the city, he remove his seat into the country for purer air, because in so doing he removes from the city, but renounces not his freedom therein; nor disclaims, in like proportion, the communion of the church."*

Richard Baxter thus writes: "I do not lay so great a stress upon the external modes and forms of worship as many young professors do. I have suspected myself, as perhaps the reader may do, that this is from a cooling and declining from my former zeal, (though the truth is, I never much complied with men of that mind.) But I find that *Judgment* and *Charity* are the causes of it, as far as I am able to discover. I cannot be so *narrow* in my principles of church-communion as many are; that are so much for a liturgy, or so much against it, so much for ceremonies, or so much against them, that they can hold communion with no church that is not of their mind and way. If I were among the Greeks, the Lutherans, the Independents; yea, the Anabaptists, (that own no heresy, nor set themselves against charity and peace,) I would hold some times occasional communion with them as Christians, (if they will give me leave, without forcing me to any sinful subscription or action:) though my most *usual* communion should be with that society which I thought most agreeable to the word of God, if I were free to choose. I cannot be of their opinion that think God will not accept him that prayeth by the common prayer book, and that such forms are a self invented worship which God rejecteth: Nor yet can I be of their mind that say the like of extemporary prayers."* Admirable principles, admirably expressed! Worthy of the man whom, bishop WILKINS being judge, it was honour enough for one age to produce: and who could say, as "he said to a friend, *I can as willingly be a martyr for* LOVE, *as for any article of the creed.*"†

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* *Chap.* xx. p. 205, 206. *Lond.* 1660. 4to.

To Mr. BAXTER let us add Dr. WILLIAM BATES, to whom we are indebted for the two preceding anecdotes. The "silver Bates," as he is styled by Mr. HERVEY; and one of the ministers appointed to manage, on the part of the Presbyterians, the conference held at the *Savoy*, by order of CHARLES II, in 1661, between them and a number of Episcopal divines on the part of the established church.

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* BAXTER's Life, Part. i. p. 133.

† BATES's *Funeral Sermon for Mr. Baxter*, Works, p. 723. *Lond.* 1723. Fol.

"He was," says Mr. HOWE, "for *entire union* of all *visible Christians*, (or *saints*, or *believers*, which in Scripture are equivalent terms,) meaning by *Christianity* what is essential thereto, whether *doctrinal*, or *practical*; as by *Humanity* we mean what is essential to man, severing accidents, as being not of the essence; and by *visibility*, the *probable appearance* thereof: and for free communion of all such, of whatsoever persuasion, in *extra* essential matters, *if they pleased*. And this design he vigourously pursued as long as there was any hope; desisting when it appeared hopeless, and resolving to wait till God should give a Spirit suitable hereto; from an apprehension that when principles on all hands were so easily accommodable, and yet that there was with too many a remaining insuperable reluctancy to the *thing itself*, God must work the cure, and not man. Accounting also, in the mean time, that notwithstanding misrepresentations, it was better to cast a mantle over the failings of brethren, than be concerned to detect and expose them. Knowing that if we be principally solicitous for the *name of God*, he will in his own way and time take care of *ours*. And in this sentiment he was not alone."*

The foregoing are only a sample. We must leave individuals, who are by far too numerous to quote within reasonable bounds, and proceed to a few facts which ascertain the *collective* judgment and practice of numbers of those wise and holy men who about that time were the glory of *England*.

(5.) It will surprise most of the good people who adhere to the Westminster Confession, (and well they may,) as a rare, and perhaps unequalled exhibition of sound scriptural doctrine, that the very Assembly who prepared it were so far from refusing communion on account of those things which now divide many precious Christians and Christian churches, that notwithstanding all their convictions and complaints of the abuses and corruptions in the discipline, worship, and government of the established church, they nevertheless remained steadily in her fellowship; nor did they leave it until they were cast out by that cruel act for conformity which would not allow them to mourn and submit, but required them also to approve. Then they arrived at the extreme limit of forbearance. Communion with the Episcopal church was not worth the sacrifice of truth and honesty: When the terms of conformity became sinful, there was no room for hesitation—they forsook all to follow Christ. But before the arrival of so afflicting a crisis, they endured what they disliked for the sake of what they loved—they bore with many and great defects for the preservation of unity: and while they had the substance of Christianity unincumbered with criminal conditions, they accounted the rupture of communion a worse evil than the scandals against which they remonstrated. "Remember," says Mr. BAXTER, when the spirit of schism began to spread its venom among the Presbyterian and Independent Dissenters, "Remember, that for the *Common Prayer*, and *Ceremonies*, and *Prelacy*, multitudes of worthy, holy men, conformed to them heretofore, from whom you would not have separated; such as Dr. PRESTON, Dr. SIBBS, Dr. TAYLOR, Dr. STAUGHTON, Mr. GATAKER, and *most, by far, of the late Synod at Westminster.*"* "When they went thither, they were," he says, "ALL CONFORMISTS, save about eight or nine, and the Scots commissioners."†

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* HOWE's *Funeral Sermon for Dr.* BATES, Works, Vol. ii. p. 456.

Twelve years after the Assembly, viz. in 1660,

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* BAXTER's LIFE, Part ii. p. 439. † *Ib.* Part iii. p. 149.

"the well meaning *Presbyterians*," as Neal calls them; i. e. the Presbyterians of the most moderate and Catholick spirit—offered, as a plan of accommodation with the Episcopalians, "Archbishop Usher's model of primitive Episcopacy:" the chief feature of which is, that, without destroying the distinctive titles of arch-bishop, bishop, and presbyter, as known in England, they might be conjoined in the *government* of the church; a bishop being *perpetual president* in the eclesiastical assemblies made up of Presbyters.*

They offered that "the *surplice*, the *cross in baptism*, and *kneeling* at the communion, should be left indifferent."*

"They were content to set aside the *Assembly's confession*, and let the articles of the church of England take place "with some few amendments." In pursuance of this scheme, about the middle of June, Mr. Calamy, Dr. Reynolds, Mr. Ash, Mr. Baxter, Dr. Wallis, Dr. Manton, and Dr. Spurstow, waited upon the king, being introduced by the Earl of *Manchester*, to crave his majesty's interposition for reconciling the differences in the church, that the people might not be deprived of their faithful pastors."†

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* Usher's *Reduction of Episcopacy unto the Synodical Form of Government. Lond.* 1658. 12mo.

† Neal, Vol. ii. p. 567.

Charles received them very affably; and soon after issued a "declaration" which though not equal to their just expectations, was yet so favourable as to draw from the *Presbyterians* about *London*, an address of *thanks* to his majesty, which was "signed by *Samuel Clark*, *William Cooper*, *Thomas Case*,* *Jo. Rawlinson*, *Jo. Sheffield*, *Thomas Gouge*, *Gab. Sanger*, *El. Pledger*, *Matthew Pool*, *Jo. Gibbon*,* *William Whitaker*, *Thomas Jacomb*, *Thomas Lye*, *John Jackson*,* *John Meriton*, *William Bates*, with many others."[†] The three marked * were members of the Assembly.

That the disposition to a compromise with the church of *England*, conceding some pretty important points to her Episcopal predilections, and stipulating merely for toleration and forbearance on other matters of external order, did not flow from transient impressions, but from mature conviction and settled judgment, is proved by subsequent events. Fourteen years afterwards, i. e. in 1675, when the rigours of the establishment on the one side, and the sufferings of the ejected ministers and their people on the other, might be supposed to have produced mutual repugnance and exasperation, Mr. Baxter drew up, at the request of a large portion of the purian interest, a "Profession of Religion," containng, among other things, the following clause; "I do hold that the book of *Common Prayer*, and of *Bishops*, *Priests*, and *Deacons*, containeth in it nothing so disagreeable to the word of God, as maketh it unlawful to live in the peaceable communion of the church that useth it."* Which accords entirely with the spirit of the *English* divines in the Assembly, who were generally against abjuring Episcopacy as simply unlawful.† Consequently, it never could have been their intention to subject the communion of the church to such rigorous limitations as have since been adopted under the sanction of their name.

[†] Id. *Ib.* p. 568—584.

These professions were not idle words. Not only did the Puritans in general commune with each other, as they had opportunity, but also, at least to a great extent, with the church of England—with their *brethren who hated them, and cast them out, for* their master's *name's sake;* and who said, as some others have said in the act of beating their fellow servants, "*Let the Lord be glorified!*" Take, as examples, the following eminent divines.

Samuel Clark, father of the authour of "*An-*

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* Baxter's Life, Part iii. p. 161. † Neal, Vol. ii. p. 50.

notations on the Bible," unable to subscribe the act of uniformity, "laid aside his ministry, and attended the church of England both as a hearer and a communicant. For, as he himself says, he durst not separate from it; nor was he satisfied about *gathering a private church out of a true church*, which he judged the Church of England to be."*

ZACHARY CROFTON, a warm advocate for the *solemn league and covenant*, was sent a prisoner to the Tower for his non-conformity; and while there, "he attended the chapel service, being against separation from the parish-churches, though he himself (as a minister) could not use the common prayer or the ceremonies." And when thus suffering for the truth's sake, by the hand of the establishment, he actually wrote, in the Tower, a tract entitled, "*Reformation not Separation; a Plea for Communion with the Church*," &c.†

HENRY JESSEY, after his ejectment, turned Baptist; "and it proved no small honour and advantage to the *Baptists* to have such a man among them. But notwithstanding his differing from his brethren in this, or any other point, he maintained the same Christian love and charity to all saints as before, not only as to friendly conversation, but also in regard to *church-communion:* and took great pains to promote the same Catholick spirit among others."[*]

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* NON-CONFORMIST'S MEMORIAL, *Lond.* 1802. Vol. i. 101.

† *Ib.* 103, 4.

Dr. Thomas Gouge, of whom it has been said by a distinguished prelate, that "all things considered, there have not, since the primitive times of Christianity, been many among the sons of men to whom that glorious character of the Son of God might be better applied, 'that he went about doing good;' although persecuted for preaching, constantly attended the parish-churches, and communicated there.[†]

Richard Wavel, "was of congregational principles, but of extensive charity. It was his principle and constant practice *to receive all whom Christ had received, without any debate about things of a doubtful nature.*"[‡]

Dr. Edmund Staunton, President of *Corpus Christi* college, Oxford, and a member of the Westminster Assembly, "always accommodated himself to those that differed from him, as far as his love of truth would permit, saying, *All men must have their grains of allowance; the most knowing Christians know but in part.* He would freely con-verse, and communicate also, with those that *held the Head, though in other things erroneous.*" Yet, notwithstanding this latitude of charity, "his *zeal* for God (to use the words of David) did *eat him up.*"*

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[*] Ib. 130.

[†] Tillotson's Sermons, Vol. ii. p. 135. 8vo. *Lond.* 1757.

[‡] Nonconf. mem. i. 213.

JOHN JONES, "a bold reprover of sin, was of the congregational persuasion, of a Catholick spirit, and for holding communion with all that agreed in the main points of Christianity, though they entertained different sentiments about lesser matters. He told some of his friends who were for separating from their brethren *because they were not altogether of their own principles*, that, "*for his part, he would be one with every body that was one with Christ.*"† Admirable sentence! worthy to be written, as a motto, in letters of gold, over the doors of every place of Christian worship.

WILLIAM BAGSHAW. "His administration of the sacraments, especially that of the Lord's Supper, was very solemn. As he would not admit the grossly ignorant and profane to that sacred feast, so he *durst not exclude those* in whom he saw any thing of the image of Christ, though they were of different sentiments from him in lesser matters of religion."‡

EDMUND CALAMY, "abhorred a close and narrow spirit, which affects, or confines religion to a party: and was much rather for a *comprehension*," (i. e. for a scheme of union and communion embracing those who are *substantially* sound, leaving smaller matters free,) "than for a perpetual separation."*

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* IB. 221, 227. † IB. 340. ‡ IB. 406.

John Farrol: "an humble, peaceable, laborious divine." When ejected for nonconformity, "his custom was to go to the publick" (established) "church," (from which he had been cast out,) "as his people also did; and either before or after to preach in private."†

Daniel Poyntell, so remarkably blessed in his ministry that he had "scarcely a prayerless family in his parish," used, even after his ejectment by the Bartholomew act, to hold ministerial fellowship with the establishment; by preaching after the order of the church of England, as he had opportunity, to his old flock at *Staplehurst*.‡

Isaac Ambrose, the well-known authour of the treatise entitled, *Looking unto Jesus*, was one of above *twenty* ministers who met at Bolton, after the Restoration of Charles II, "to consult what course to take. Mr. Ambrose and Mr. Cole, of *Preston*, declared before them all, that they could read the *Common Prayer*, and should do it; the state of their places requiring it, in which, otherwise, their service was now necessarily at an end."

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* Id. Vol. ii. 208. † Ib. 279. ‡ Ib. 336.

☞ "The ministers, considering the circumstances of their case, *approved their proceeding*."[*]

John Richardson, "in his judgment about church-matters was moderate and sober; never condemning any for differing from him about conformity," (viz. to the church of England,) "whom he thought to be godly. He frequented Dr. *Cumberland's*, (afterwards Bishop of Peterborough's,) lecture at Stamford. At *Kirkton*, he went constantly to the church, came betimes, joined in the liturgy and received the sacrament."[†]

Edmund Trench, in his diary, July 5, 1677, remarks, that "troublesome, censorious, dividing spirits had occasioned more thoughts of those unhappy controversies about forms and ceremonies, church-government, &c. and I was still more satisfied, even when most serious, that the bitter extremes of *Dissenters*, as well as of rigid *Conformists*, were highly displeasing to God: that spiritual pride, narrow-spirited mistakes, and grievous wresting of the holy Scriptures, were the evil roots of unchristian divisions and real schism. I was much grieved at such uncharitable and love-killing principles and practices."

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[*] Ib. 362. [†] Ib. 431.

Agreeably to this "Christian catholicism," he, on the one hand, offered to Mr. B. the minister of the parish, "to preach once a day gratis, and read the common prayer in the afternoon;" and "on the other hand, he refused to countenance a certain non-conformist minister there, as on other accounts, so principally for his binding his people against all communion with the parish churches."*

MATTHEW MEAD, authour of *The Almost Christian tried and cast.* "His judgment, in reference to matters of church order, was for union and communion of all visible Christians; *viz.* of such as did visibly 'hold the Head,' as to the principal *credenda* and *agenda* of Christianity—the great things belonging to the faith and practice of a Christian; so as nothing be made necessary to Christian communion but what *Christ has made necessary*, or what is indeed necessary to one's being a Christian. What he publickly essayed to this purpose the world knows: and many more private endeavours and strugglings of his for such an union, I have not been unacquainted with. The unsuccessfulness of which endeavours, he said, not long before his last confinement, he thought would break his heart."*

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* IB. 454, 455.

Francis Tallents. "In king *William's* time, when overtures were made towards a comprehension, some gentlemen, who greatly valued his judgment, sent for him to London to discourse with him about it; particularly concerning the re-ordaining of such as were ordained by presbyters. Upon mature deliberation he declared that he could not submit to it: and drew up his reasons at large. But he was much for occasional conformity, as a token of charity towards those whom we cannot statedly join with. In 1691 he entered into his new place of worship—and caused it to be written on the walls "*That it was built not for a faction or party, but for promoting repentance, and faith in communion with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.*" And in speaking of the glory of the church in the latter times, he used to say, "When God shall repair its breaches and build it up, the subtilties of the schools, and many canons of councils, and customs of old, will be laid aside; and a great simplicity in things of faith and worship will be owned and practised. *No more conditions shall be made for*

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* Ib. 466. (from Howe's Sermon, Works. Vol. ii. 474.)

the communion of churches than Christ has made for communion with him."*

Joseph Alleine, authour of that celebrated book, entitled, *An Alarm to the Unconverted,* though he suffered a long imprisonment because he would not cease from his ministry after his ejectment, yet "often attended the worship of the parish churches, and encouraged his people to do the same."†

Anthony Burgess, a member of the Westminster Assembly, "after his ejectment, lived in a very cheerful and pious manner, frequenting and encouraging the ministry of the conforming clergyman."‡

George Hopkins, himself a Presbyterian, after his ejectment "frequented the parish church, with his family; received the holy communion, and did all things required of him as a lay member of the church of England."§

The reader must not suppose that these are all the instances which can be quoted. They are taken from a much larger list now before me; and are given merely as a sample of the views, feelings, and practice, which prevailed among the English Puritans at and near the time of the Westminster Assembly. They furnish an index to the publick mind and habits. The persons to whom they relate may be considered, like the Assembly itself, as a sort of committee reflecting the light, and reporting the judgment, of evangelical England. They were no creatures of faction. They were neither obstinate in peculiarities, nor yet "driven about by every wind of doctrine." In "malice," they were indeed "children;" but in "understanding" they were "men." Such men, that there was hardly an individual among them of whom Nature, and Nature Christianized, might not "stand up and say to all the world, *this was a* MAN!" They were men of superiour talent, of high scholarship, intimately acquainted with the whole body of Christian theology and history. They were deeply versed in the Scriptures. They gave their days and nights to the study of the sacred volumes. They bowed implicitly to the authority of God; but would allow no other "lord of their conscience." With all their meekness and submission to the "higher powers" they were perfectly intractable on the capital points of faith and duty. Neither ecclesiastical nor secular authority; no bishops nor dukes; no king nor parliament; neither flattery nor threats; preferment nor penalties, could move them here. Yet with this adamantine firmness in essentials, they were gentle and pliant in secondary things. For the "answer of a good conscience," they "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods; enduring grief" to prosecutions, fines, disgrace, poverty, hunger, cold, bonds, banishment. Yet, under this accumulation of sorrows, enough, one would suppose, to chill every warm feeling of the heart, they were full "of life and love;" they contended for communion with all Christian churches, even with that church whose rulers were then oppressing them! Christians, look at this fact. Remember it was these men, and such as these, who framed the Westminster confession; and say, upon your responsibility before God, whether the construction which shuts *church-communion* out of their doctrine of the *communion of saints* can possibly be correct? It is certainly true—these pages shew it, that much aversion from communion, especially with the establishment, was to be found, after the Bartholomew-act, in some ministers and congregations. But was it general? Was it not chiefly among "gathered churches?"* Was it considered as conformable to Christian principle? As obedience to Christ? As a solid and pre-eminent part of a reformation-testimony? Or as the very reverse? Did not the concurring judgment of the best, wisest, holiest, boldest, most experienced advocates of, and sufferers for, the truth, lament it, condemn it, resist it? Did they not deplore its progress as the triumph of petty strifes over gospel unity? As a conspiracy of pride and ignorance to lay waste the kingdom of God under pretext of defending it? Open their volumes and answer.

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* Ib. 155, 156. † Ib. 211. ‡ Ib. 350. § Ib. 392.

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* "Gathered" churches were formed by drawing away members from the parish-churches, even where the ministry was exemplary, and the ministrations edifying. The effect was worthy of the cause. Christian was pitted against Christian. Heart-burnings necessarily followed. Love sunk as Jealousy rose: and when sinful passions embittered communion, it was naturally contracted within other limits than those fixed by Christian character. This culling system did not confine its

The spirit of Catholick fellowship flourished, amid suffering, on the continent also. The "burning fiery furnace" kindled anew, tried and purified the churches of France! but the "smell of fire" passed not upon those garments which they wore as followers of the Son of God. All that they endured from Papal perfidy was much too little to pervert their judgment or poison their affections on the subject of fraternal charity. Let

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blessings to England. It has been no uncommon thing for a minister to be sent, on a long journey, to preach to two or three individuals in the midst of a district where pure gospel was established; and to set about the business of "gathering;" i. e. to excite discontent and desertion at the hazard, in many instances, of so dividing the Christian strength of the district, as that, in a short time, it might be destitute of the gospel altogether. If "the Prince of the Devils" ever relax his sternness, he cannot but smile at the dexterity with which his work is frequently performed, and his interest promoted, by Christian hands.

them speak for themselves through their publick organ, the great *John Claude*. In a work which received their official sanction, he says, *“The points which divide us,” (Papists and Protestants,) “are points neither of simple discipline, as that for which *Victor* bishop of Rome separated his church from those of Asia, which celebrated Easter on the 14th day of the moon—nor simply scholastick questions which consist in terms far removed from the knowledge of the people; as that which is called *trium capitulorum*, which excited so many troubles in the time of the emperour *Justinian* and pope *Vigilius*—nor simple personal interests, as in the schisms of the antipopes—nor crimes nor accusations purely personal, as in the schism of the Donatists—nor even a general corruption of manners, although it was very great in the Clergy during the time of our fathers. The articles which separate us are points which, in our view, trouble essentially the faith whereby we are united to Jesus Christ—points which alter, essentially, the worship we owe to God; which damage, essentially, the sources of our justification; and which corrupt the means, internal and external, of obtaining both grace and glory. In a word, they are points which we believe to be altogether incompatible with salvation; and which, consequently, do not permit us to give the title or concede the quality of a true church of Jesus Christ to a party which is confirmed in their profession and practice; and aims at compelling us to the same thing.

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* Chacun sait quels sont les points qui nous divisent; que ce ne sont ni des points de simple discipline, comme celui pour lequel Victor Evesque de Rome separa son Eglise de celles d' Asie qui celebroient la Pasque le quatorzieme jour de la lune—ni simplement des questions d'ecole, qui ne consistent qu'en des termes eloignez de la connoissance du peuple; comme celle qu'on appelle *trium capitulorum*, qui excita tant de troubles du tems de l' Empereur Justinien, et du Pope Vigilius—ni des simples interets personnels; tels qu'on les a vus dans les schismes des Antipapes—ni des crimes ou des accusations purement personelles; comme dans le schisme des Donatistes—ni mesme une corruption generale de mœurs; bien qu'elle fust tres grande dans le Clergé du tems de nos peres. Les articles qui nous separent sont des points qui, selon nous, trouble essenciellement la foy par laquelle nous sommes unis a Jesus Christ—des points qui alterent essenciellement le culte que nous devons a Dieu; qui gastent essenciellement les sources de nostre Justification; et qui corrompent les moyens soit interieurs, soit exterieurs, de nous acquerir la grace et la gloire. En un mot; ce sont

"I acknowledge that our controversies are not *all* of such importance. There are, without doubt, some of less weight and force; on which

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des points que nous croyons entierement incompatibles avec la salut; et qui, par consequent, nous empechent de pouvoir donner le titre ou la qualite de vraye Eglise de Jesus Christ a une party qui s'est affirmy dans leur profession. et dans leur pratique; et qui nous a volu contraindre a la mesme chose. J'avoue qu'on ne peut dire que nos controverses soient toutes de cette importance: il-y-en a, sans doute, qui sont de moindre poids et de moindre force, sur lesquelles il etoit bon de se reformer, mais qui pourtant n'eussent pas pû donner seules un juste su-

formation were desirable; but which, neverthe-
ss, could not, of themselves, furnish a just cause
separation. I place in this rank the question
out the *Limbus*[*] of the ancient fathers—that
the local descent of JESUS CHRIST into hell—
at of the distinction between presbyters and
shops by divine right—that of the observation
Lent; and some others of the same sort; where
e readily perceive there was errour and super-
ition to correct; *but which were not sufficient to*
use a rupture of communion: Accordingly it
as not for such things that our fathers quitted
e church of Rome."

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de separation. Je mets en ce rang la question du *Limbe* des anciens
res—celle de la descente locale de Jesus Christ aux Enfers—celle
la distinction des Prestres et des Evesques de droit divin—celle de
bservation d'un Carême; et quelques autres de cette nature, où l'on
it bien qu'il-y-avoit de l'erreur et de la superstition a corriger;
is qui n'alloient pas jusqu' a pouvoir causer une rupture de commu-
on. Aussi, n'est ce pas pour ces sortes de choses que nos Peres ont
itté l'Eglise de Rome, &c.

CLAUDE. *Defense de la Reformation*, p. 210. 4to. 1673.

[*] A state of saints who, before the coming of Christ, had departed
life: being neither hell, nor heaven, nor purgatory; but without
sense of pain supposed in the first and last; and without the fruition
the blessedness belonging to the second, was believed in by the
urch of Rome under the name of *Limbus patrum*; into which she
ches that Christ, after his passion, literally descended; and by his
eaching there, delivered the souls of the Fathers thus detained.[†]

[†] CATECHISMUS *Romanus* ex decreto concilii TRIDENTINI, et
iæ, v. 1596. p. 49. 12mo.

What think you, reader, of this declaration on the part of the French churches in 1672, only a few years before they were to pour out their blood afresh as martyrs to the truth of the Lord Jesus? Does it bear any resemblance to our sectarianism? Has it any thing in common with those maxims of disunion which put us apart and render us mutually cold, suspicious, hostile?

If this be staggering, what shall we say to a publick deed of the church of *Scotland* nearly forty years later, placing church-communion explicitly upon principles common to the Reformed Churches? It is an act of her General Assembly, entitled, "*Act concerning the receiving of strangers into church-communion, and baptizing their children;*" and runs as follows:

"The General Assembly considering that all due encouragement ought to be given to persons educated in the protestant churches, who have come, or may come, to reside in this country, and may incline to join in communion with this church; Therefore they hereby recommend to all ministers, in whose parishes any such strangers may happen to reside, to shew all tenderness to them when they come to desire the benefit of sealing ordinances: And if such strangers, being free of scandal, and professing their faith in Christ and obedience to him, shall desire baptism to their children, ministers shall cheerfully comply with their desire in administrating the sacrament of baptism to their children, upon the parents engaging to educate them in the fear of God, and knowledge of the principles of the Reformed Protestant religion."*

Let us analyze this act.

It was passed for the purpose of receiving "*strangers* into church-communion;" they *continuing* strangers, and not accounting themselves plenary members of the church of *Scotland*. For about the reception of a person wishing to become such a member, and giving due satisfaction as to his principles and character, there could be no scruple in her ministers; and no necessity of an act of the General Assembly to secure due "tenderness." Men are not apt to be harsh in their treatment of decent applicants for admission into *their* church.

It contemplated and provided for the reception of such strangers into *habitual* communion. For it distinctly specifies their *residing* in the country as strangers; and the probability of their having *several* children to offer in baptism; and says nothing about the *term* of their residence: all which puts their case out of the limits of *extraordinary* and *transient* fellowship.

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* Acts of *the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, May, 1711. p. 22, 23.

In order to this regular, habitual, church-communion, it does not require of these strangers an approbation of all or any *peculiarities* in the church of *Scotland*, but simply a credible christian character, and a promise, when the communion was in the form of baptism, to educate their children, not—be it noticed—not according to the standards of the church of Scotland; but according to the principles of the Reformed Protestant religion!—Hence it appears,

1. That this act was passed for the purpose of facilitating communion with strangers who did not even *pretend* to *join* the church of Scotland as complete members.

2. That the church of Scotland, at this time, required nothing as a term of full communion with her, but what was *common* to "the principles of the Reformed Protestant religion." And

3. That a member of any reformed church in any part of the world, not acting unworthy of his profession, was entitled, upon that ground, to an equal participation with her own members in her most sacred, i. e. in her sealing ordinances.

Here is now the church of *Scotland*, the only national church upon earth adhering to the Westminster confession; and which had adhered to it from the beginning—the very church from which we have sprung; and in that state in which we glory to have sprung from her, giving to the world her official construction of the article concerning the "*communion of saints*;" giving it freely and frankly; without passion, or pressure, or party-feeling: and giving it in flat contradiction to the construction of those who for the last eighty years have claimed to be her genuine sons; but who were under the pressure, if not of passion, yet certainly of party.*

Who is likely to be right? Christians! as in the sight of God, judge ye!

On this particular point, viz. "*the communion of saints*," the argument is conceived to have fully made out the three following propositions—

1. That the phrase "communion of saints" was originally intended to express "church-communion;" and was understood to express it by all parts of the Christian church down to the time of the Westminster assembly.

2. That the very terms of the article so entitled in their confession, as well as collateral expressions, prove that it must be understood in the then established sense, and cannot admit of any other.

3. That it not only continued to be so under-

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* The reader will remember that this work is *immediately* designed for churches which have descended, though by separation, from the *church of Scotland.*

stood privately and publickly; by individuals and by churches adopting that confession, for nearly, if not quite, a century later; but that the opinion and practice of the best and holiest men who were contemporary with, or flourished shortly after, that memorable assembly, coincided perfectly with the doctrine of this volume.

It is not necessary to go into further details. The preceding pages are believed to have shewn, that the communion for which they plead is enjoined in the word of God—was understood to be so enjoined by the Apostolick and primitive church—was acted upon under that persuasion—was contended for in opposition to every sort of sectaries—was asserted, and the doctrine of it inserted, in the briefest summary of faith ever current in the churches, the apostles' creed—was maintained at the revival of the cause of God and truth at the Reformation—was practised to the greatest extent in the best of churches in the best of times—was cordially received by that venerable representation of evangelical interests, the assembly of divines at Westminster—is in perfect unison with the known convictions and conduct of the most glorious champions of the cross whom England ever saw—was not only received, but is formally, explicitly, and fully, maintained in their confession of faith—has been reasserted and vindicated by the church of *Scotland*, thirty years before the *Secession*—and stands, at this hour, a conspicuous part of the solemn, publick, profession of churches which, on both sides of the Atlantick, have originated from her.

Were it safe to reason from profession to conduct, the inference from these premises would be, that all who have adopted the Westminster confession of faith as the confession of their own faith, would most cordially reciprocate the best offices of Christian love; would join together in sweet communion; would hail as a brother, and welcome to their sacramental table, every one who bears the image of their glorified Lord.

But what are the facts? Not only is the Catholick church divided, but many even of those particular churches which are thus united in the same faith, and organized under, substantially, the same order, stand aloof from each other as if they were "strangers and foreigners," and not "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." In some of them, at least, the very fact of belonging as a member to any other Christian denomination, is a regular and almost insuperable obstacle to communion. If a Christian, however, his character and conversation may adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour, should happen, in the course of providence, to be present at one of their "solemn feasts," and should desire, with them, to "pay his vows unto the Lord," he is repulsed. "Why? Are not his professed principles the same with your own?" "The very same." "Does he not give as satisfactory proofs of 'living by faith upon the Son of God,' as are given by those whom you invite, welcome, urge to your sacramental fellowship?" "It cannot be denied." But identity of principle and a life of faith upon the Son of God are *lame recommendations!* It is not enough that he is a *Christian*, he must also be a *sectarian*—to follow *Christ* goes for nothing, unless he follow *us:* And so, with the traits of his master's image strong upon him, he is shut out among the profane!!

On the other hand, when members of these churches have an opportunity of shewing forth the Lord's death in a church which wears his name, though it wear not theirs; and breathes his spirit, though it repeat not their watch-word, nor keep their countersign; they will not, when asked, touch his sacred memorials. "*This do in remembrance of* ME," weighs upon their consciences no where but in their own precincts; and they will rather withhold their testimony to his dying love, than recognise their union with fellow-believers all whose feelings and habits have not been melted down and amalgamated with their own peculiarities in the crucible of party-zeal. Should they, however, at any time, break through these restrictions—should they mingle their tears of thankfulness, and their hymns of praise, with those who having "obtained like precious faith with themselves," are putting their seal to their privileges and their hope at the table of their common Lord,—they become objects of suspicion; their conduct is reproved as disorderly; the communion which they have held is pronounced *offensive;* and their brethren become as alarmed and indignant, as if their honouring the Lord Jesus Christ in his *acknowledged* ordinances and members were a real scandal—an "iniquity to be punished by the judges!!"

Nay, to such a length is this fastidiousness carried in certain churches, that the simple *hearing* of the gospel, from the mouth of the most faithful minister who happens not to be within their own circle, is accounted an *ecclesiastical crime;* and a sufficient ground of *church-censure!* And should such a minister be, on any occasion, admitted in ministerial communion to one of their pulpits, however honoured he may have been of God—I tremble to write it—Blasphemy itself could hardly excite a greater ferment!! It would be vain to deny the accuracy of this statement. It is the truth, the *plain* truth, and nothing but the truth. The facts which justify it are notorious to the whole world.

Such being the relative situation of several churches, comprising many congregations, and an immense multitude of individuals, it is natural to inquire into the history of so strange a phenomenon.

It may be laid down as a general rule with regard to human disagreements, that the causes which produce them are very different from the reasons which are assigned for their vindication: It being nothing uncommon, with our sinful and inconsistent race, to father upon *Conscience* the offspring of *Passion*: and to clothe, with the sanctions of religion, whatever accords with the power of habit, or flatters the vanity of *name.* But supposing the present case to be an exception: that the churches have, in this instance, escaped the common infirmity; and that the *alleged* are the *real* causes of their distant, not to say hostile, deportment toward each other; it is impossible, considering the scriptural doctrine and their own concurrent faith concerning the unity of the body of Christ, it is impossible for a sound mind to be convinced by any thing short of demonstration, that their actual state is either pleasing to God or beneficial to man. Nor is this an unreasonable demand—For, Every church refusing to hold communion with another, does, by that fact, declare herself to be too pure for such communion; i. e. that such communion would contaminate her in the eyes of her God, and bring down upon her the tokens of his displeasure. It needs no proof that a church must be *very sure* of her own pretensions before she venture upon such high and dangerous ground—*Very sure* that the mantle of her excluding zeal does not cover offences against the Lord her God quite as provoking as those which she charges upon others—that there is no place for the Jewish proverb, *Physician! heal thyself*, or for the heathen aphorism,

————————*mutato nomine de* TE
Fabula narratur—*

—that she does not wink at abuses in her own members, which she laments and reprobates in her neighbours. It is the more necessary for her to be *sure* of her own sanctity, as the very assumption of a censorial power over her Christian sisters invites the most unsparing scrutiny; and no honourable a mark is affixed by Truth itself, to those who, regardless of their own faults, say, *Stand by thyself; come not near me; for I am holier than thou!*

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* —Change but the *name*,
The *character's* your own.—

The refusal of one evangelical church to hold communion with another is, in appearance at least, an offence against the visible unity of the body of Christ, and against his commandment to cultivate that unity at the expense of much inconvenience, and even of many sacrifices. Difference of denomination, it must be owned, does not *necessarily* involve this consequence: but exclusive communions, founded on that difference, it will be difficult to acquit from the imputation.

In fine—To refuse communion with a church or with her members is, in effect, to unchurch her, and to declare that she is no church, and that her members are no followers, of Jesus Christ. At least it is a declaration that they are so very corrupt as to render their communion *unlawful*. Now such a declaration, whether expressed or implied, can be viewed as nothing less, on the part of those who make it, than an *excommunication* in disguise—but a disguise so thin that it might as well be dropped. For what is excommunication (the heaviest penalty in the kingdom of God) but a judicial exclusion from the communion of the church on account of the *unworthiness* of the excommunicated; i. e. the *unlawfulness* of holding communion with them? If then you *refuse* communion with a church or with individuals, justifying your refusal by the plea of their *corrupt-*

ness, your conduct is a virtual denial of their visible Christianity; and, having already the substance, wants nothing but the form, of an excommunicating act. This consequence, viz. the virtual unchurching and excommunicating all the churches and people of God upon earth with whom we *refuse* communion, is so dreadful that every Christian heart shrinks from it with fear and horrour. It is, therefore, disowned and rejected by the most strenuous opponents of catholick fellowship. We are glad to acquit their *intentions;* but cannot so easily acquit their *argument*, or their *practice*. They shut out from their communion other Christians and churches: what is this but excommunication? what more can they do to the blasphemer and the profligate? This draws deep. For the scriptural doctrine, common to Protestant Christendom, is, that "heinous violations of the law of God in practice; and such errours in principle as unhinge the Christian profession, are the only scandals for which the sentence of excommunication should be passed."* Where it is inflicted, either formally or practically, for less weighty reasons, for secular ends, or through the influence of party-passions, there can be but one opinion among Christians who are not infatuated by their own share in the sin—it is a deed which the Lord our God will never ratify in heaven; and which owes to his marvellous forbearance whatever immunity it enjoys from prompt and exemplary punishment on earth.

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* *Discip. of the Ass. Ref. Church*, B. ii. ch. vi. Title, "of excommunication."

Seeing, therefore, that the refusing our communion to other Christians when it is desired, and the declining theirs when it is offered, involve claims of great peril, if not of great presumption—are an apparent violation of that unity which our master has commanded us to maintain—and treat many members of the household of faith like open unbelievers; virtually excommunicating them, as if they were blots and scandals to their holy calling—Seeing these things, it becomes us to pause: to review our proceedings as those "who shall give account:" and to be thoroughly satisfied, by an honest and intelligent examination of the word of God, that our reasons shall be found valid and ourselves acquitted at his tribunal; lest we meet with the rebuke of those who "make sad the hearts which he has not made sad;" and instead of honouring and comforting, "smite their fellow-servants," with the aggravation of smiting them in His name.

PART III.—*A Review of Objections.*

What, then, are the objections to a more liberal communion than we have been accustomed to cherish? *What* are those imperative considerations which, apparently, in the face of plain scriptural injunction of our own solemn profession; and of dangers enough, one would suppose, to appal the stoutest heart, do, nevertheless, *forbid* us to reciprocate frank and cordial fellowship with all *acknowledged* Christians and Christian churches? In so far as the authour can discover, they are, substantially, the following, viz.

"That God may hold communion with those with whom we may not—

"That so general a communion as this plea inculcates, would prostrate all scriptural distinction between the precious and the vile, and that salutary discipline by which the house of God is to be kept from pollution—

"That it involves an approbation of abuses and corruptions in churches with which it is held; and thus makes us partakers of other men's sins—

"That by giving publick countenance to churches erroneous or corrupt, it destroys the force, or at least shackles the freedom, of a faithful testimony to Christ and his truth—

"That it not only diminishes the value, but supersedes the necessity, and impeaches the propriety, of all that service which, in every age, the churches of God have rendered to 'pure and undefiled religion,' by their judicial confessions of faith—

"That as communion presupposes and is founded upon union, it is a contradiction to hold communion with churches with which we are not united; and, therefore, that all such communion is inconsistent with distinct ecclesiastical organization—

"That whatever may have been the practice of primitive times, the state of the church is so greatly altered as to make the imitation of them inexpedient, if not impracticable, now—

"That whereas the sentiments and examples of holy men and evangelical churches, in later days, may seem to thwart the strain of these objections, and to throw their advocates into the dilemma of either aspersing those whom they profess to venerate, or convicting themselves of schism, all such sentiments and examples were adapted to *extraordinary circumstances*, and are inapplicable to any regular settled state—and

"That all Christians, being one in spirit, the best ends of their communion may be answered, in their present state of separation, without the evils incident to its publick extension."

If there are other objections affecting the general question, they have not come to the authour's knowledge, nor occurred to his reflexions. But if these, or any considerable part of them, are well founded, there can be no doubt that his whole preceding argument is overthrown—that his doctrine labours under some radical fallacy—and that the practice which has grown out of it at *New-York* and elsewhere, has given just offence, and merits severe reprehension.

Yet plausible as they are, and solid as they appear to many honest and respectable men, it may be allowed, without the imputation of arrogance, to try their soundness: and, long as they have had possession of the popular ear, to shew that in this, as in other instances, the popular favour has been unwisely bestowed.

Considering the very great difficulties with which they would press us, it is surprising that *not one of them is so much as noticed in the word of God!* If the communion of his church is to be so circumscribed, not to say fastidious—If the religious intercourse of his own people with each other is so materially influenced by variance in things which may confessedly stand with the substance of his truth and the power of his grace—if Christians of different name, by meeting at the table of their Redeemer, break down the hedges which he has set about his vineyard; make themselves reciprocally chargeable with whatever errour or sin may be found in their respective denominations; and instead of building up, destroy his kingdom—it is "passing strange" that neither their master nor his apostles should have cautioned them against the peril? Nay, that the language of his word when treating of this very subject; and especially when rectifying abuses and settling controversies, should be absolutely silent on the topics of objection; and rather calculated to lead Christians into mistake! For it cannot be denied, that while their union, love and fellowship, as members of *His* body, are inculcated with deep solemnity and enforced by awful motives, those impediments to communion, so formidable in our eyes, *have not even a place* among the inspired discussions! Did not the Lord Jesus foresee them? Were not human infirmities and passions and sins the same in the days of Paul as they have been ever since? Do not the writings of this wondrous man, and the apostolick history by Luke, record facts which modern opinion and practice—the opinion and practice of many among ourselves—the spirit of the foregoing objections, would consider as not only warranting, but demanding, separate connexions, and interdicting communion between their members? And yet did either Paul or the other apostles advise or countenance any such measure? On the contrary, while *we* seem to dread communion between all those who "call on the name of the Lord Jesus," as dangerous to the purity of his church and the answer of a good conscience, did *they* not seem to dread the disruption of it as inconsistent with her unity, as unfriendly to her peace, and scandalous to her name? And this, notwithstanding objections which, upon the principles of the objectors, were as obvious then as they can be now? Whence this prodigious difference between their views and ours? Did they not understand the interest of the church? Did they not regard it? Did they leave to the wisdom of these latter days a remedy for evils against which their master made no provision? and commit to *our* hands the finishing of *His* imperfect work? Or in very deed are the objections faulty and false? This is more probable. Let us, then, weigh them in the balances, and see if we can discover wherein they are wanting.

The scope of this treatise being to shew that we are bound to fellowship with those whose "fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ,"*

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* 1. John 1. 3.

I. The first objection is for making short work with the whole matter, by granting the premises and denying the conclusion—maintaining that "God may and does hold communion with those with whom we may not:" and, therefore, that the whole superstructure of church-communion, built upon the foundation of communion with him, falls to the ground.

Such an objection is of strange hearing in Christian ears which have been unaccustomed to it; and may be treated as a phantom which has been raised for the pleasure of laying it again. But it is no phantom—It has a real existence, and a strong power over men respectable for their understanding, amiable for their benevolence, and venerable for their piety. It was urged upon the author many years ago, by an excellent Anti-Burgher minister,* remarkable for the cheerfulness of his temper and the catholicism of his feelings. The conversation turned upon the separation of the Burgher and Anti-Burgher churches. "Do you not account the Burgher churches to be true churches of Jesus Christ?" 'I do.' "Do you not believe that the gospel of Christ is purely preached there, his ordinances scripturally administered, his people edified, and his presence enjoyed?"

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* The late Reverend Mr. ALICE, of Paisley.

'O yes.' "Why, then, will you not hold communion with them?" The reply was in the very words quoted, 'God may hold communion with those with whom we may not.'* The objection is, then, worthy of a serious examination.

It must have one of three senses, viz.

Either that God holds *secret* communion with some with whom his people, who are vitally united to Christ, can have no such communion:

Or, That God holds *secret* communion with some with whom his *professing* people may not hold *publick* communion:

Or, That God holds *publick* communion with some with whom his church may not hold it.

According to the *first* of these senses, the proposition is neither sound in itself, nor relative to the argument.

Not sound in itself—God holds no *secret* communion with an unregenerated man. And all regenerated men have, in virtue of union with Christ their head, both union and communion with each other—union and communion utterly independent on their own will; and which they can neither break nor avoid.

Not relative to the argument—For the question is not about invisible and secret, but about visible and publick communion.

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* The same principle is stated more at length, though with some confusion, in WILSON's *Defence of the Reformation-principles of the church of Scotland*, p. 70. 1769.

In its *second* sense, the proposition is true; but not more applicable than in the first. For no intelligent Christian will admit that things which are an absolute secret between God and the soul, can be a rule of proceeding to his church; nor is the right of communion with her ever placed on such a footing.

In the *third*, which is its only remaining sense, viz. that "God holds *publick* communion with some with whom his church may not," the proposition is, indeed, strictly applicable; but, at the same time, materially incorrect.

1. It runs directly counter to the strain of scriptural authority.

"That which we have seen and heard," says John the beloved, "declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."*

The gospel, according to this apostle, is "declared" with a view of conferring upon men those blessed privileges, that transcendently valuable interest, of which he and his fellow-believers had already the possession. He calls it "fellowship;"

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* 1 John, 1. 3.

i. e. communion, or an interest "common" to all concerned. But wherein consists its value? What renders it so ineffably desirable and glorious? This: "Our fellowship, our communion," saith the apostle, "is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Now if our communion with God is a sufficient reason for inviting others to communion with us; then his communion with others is a sufficient reason for our communion with them. For our invitation must be addressed to believers or to unbelievers. If to believers, it can be nothing short of a cordial welcome to participate with us in all our privileges as the "sons of God;" and so the apostle has settled the question of the *whole* communion which Christians *can* have together; and settled it exactly and explicitly upon this principle, that they have communion with God. If, on the other hand, our invitation is to unbelievers; it can mean nothing short of an earnest exhortation to become sharers with us, by faith, in all that fellowship which flows from our fellowship with God. And would it not be singularly inconsistent, thus to invite *unbelievers* upon the very argument and plea that "our communion is with God;" and the moment they become *believers*, and shew that their communion also is with God, to turn round and tell them that communion with *him* is not a sufficient warrant for communion with us?

Again; the apostle Paul lays upon Christians the following injunction; "Receive ye one another as Christ also received us to the glory of God."*

This "receiving" can be interpreted of nothing but of their embracing each other in all holy affection and fellowship; for so Christ had "received" them. The injunction has for its immediate object the repression of those jealousies, alienations, and divisions, which had originated, or were likely to originate, from the dispute about meats and days in the church at Rome. But the rule is general; and has decided,

That matters which destroy not communion with Christ are not to destroy the communion of Christians: But

That when one Christian, or party of Christians, sees the tokens of Christ's approbation and presence with another, the warrant is perfect, and the duty imperative, to reciprocate all the offices of Christian love, with a kindness and generosity modelled after Christ's example to them both. If this does not import a command to hold communion, church-communion, with all who give evidence of being in communion with Christ; and precisely for that reason, it will be difficult to find a commandment in the Bible. "There is no cause, therefore," says Calvin in his commentary on the preceding verse, "there is no cause for a man's boasting that he will glorify God in his own way. For of so great moment in God's sight is the unity of his servants, that he will not permit his glory to sound forth amidst dissensions and strifes. This one thought should effectually restrain that mad passion for contest and quarrel which fills the minds of many at the present day."*

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* Rom. xv. 7.

2. The objection is subversive of all church-communion whatsoever.

Visible Christianity; i. e. a profession and walk such as we have a right to expect from the disciples of Christ, is the only and the uncontested ground of ecclesiastical fellowship.

But what is this "visible Christianity?" This "profession and walk of Christ's disciples?" Why is it required? And what is its use? Is it any thing else than the external effect and indication of communion with God? Is it of any other use in the present question than to ascertain, as far as can be ascertained by outward evidence, that its possessors are the people of God? If, then, communion with him—if being his people, owned of him as such, is not, of itself, a suf-

ficient reason for our communion with them in those ordinances which are appointed expressly for their benefit, there can be no church-communion at all. The thing is impossible: at least it is impossible in the church of *God*—What communion, upon different principles, there may be in churches of *man's* making, is another question; but a question which it were profaneness and pollution so much as to agitate.

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* Calv. Opp. T. vii. p. 99.

Instead, therefore, of conceding that God holds visible communion with some with whom we may not, I shall reverse the position; and say, that I ought, and will, and shall, as I have opportunity, hold communion with all who have communion with God, to the whole extent of the proof of such communion; and account it my unutterable privilege. I will not be afraid nor ashamed to be found in company with any person in *any thing*, be it sacramental service or other act of worship, when the God of my salvation deigns to be of the party. No power on earth shall hinder me from saying, "I will go with you," to any to whom I can add, "for God is with you." On this ground I will venture my peace, my soul, my eternal blessedness! And let those who refuse to walk in "church-communion" with such as "walk with God," look well after the account which they shall be able to render.

II. The second objection supposes that "the doctrine of church-communion, upon the principle of the common salvation, with all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, compels us to admit every one who passes himself for a Christian; and thus, by abolishing the distinction between the precious and the vile, prostrates the scriptural discipline, and lays open the house of God to utter profanation."

It will be well for those who make this objection, if they shall be found to distinguish, in their *own* communion, between the "precious and the vile," with that anxiety which their argument professes.

But to the argument itself. A general profession of Christianity, as is shewn by every day's experience, may be, and often is, compatible with the want of every Christian influence, and even with hostility to almost every Christian doctrine. To let it serve as an apology for errour and vice; and, under its broad protection, to admit to communion men who evince neither repentance toward God, nor faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, would be, indeed, to confound the holy with the profane; to turn the temple of God into a den of thieves; and to destroy the very end and essence of sacramental fellowship. The objectors themselves cannot have a more firm and

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Instead, therefore, of conceding that God holds visible communion with some with whom we may not, I shall reverse the position; and say, that I ought, and will, and shall, as I have opportunity, hold communion with all who have communion with God, to the whole extent of the proof of such communion; and account it my unutterable privilege. I will not be afraid nor ashamed to be found in company with any person in *any thing*, be it sacramental service or other act of worship, when the God of my salvation deigns to be of the party. No power on earth shall hinder me from saying, "I will go with you," to any to whom I can add, "for God is with you." On this ground I will venture my peace, my soul, my eternal blessedness! And let those who refuse to walk in "church-communion" with such as "walk with God," look well after the account which they shall be able to render.

II. The second objection supposes that "the doctrine of church-communion, upon the principle of the common salvation, with all who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, compels us to admit every one who passes himself for a Christian; and thus, by abolishing the distinction between the precious and the vile, prostrates the scriptural discipline, and lays open the house of God to utter profanation."

It will be well for those who make this objection, if they shall be found to distinguish, in their *own* communion, between the "precious and the vile," with that anxiety which their argument professes.

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founded abhorrence of such infidel charity, such latitude of ruin, than has the writer of these remarks. But they should remember that if their objection is conclusive against him, it is equally conclusive against the confession of their faith, and the word of their God. For the language of both extends the privilege of whatever communion the church enjoys to all them who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus. Such a consequence they will assuredly disown and disprove. And when they shall have vindicated their confession and their Bible from the charge of so great an absurdity, they will have refuted their own objection.

But to reply more directly, I add,

1. That the objection is altogether inapplicable to the communion here defended. For it is, expressly, communion with those who are *acknowledged* to be Christians by the objectors themselves. And surely communion with such as give evidence of their having "received Christ Jesus the Lord, and of their walking in him," contains neither principle nor precedent for the admission of such as do not give proof of either. To welcome friends and brethren is not to encourage aliens and enemies.

2. "Calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus," is not a loose nor equivocal phrase. It is a

comprehensive, yet precise and well-defined, character of a real and orderly Christian. Its terms must be interpreted by those fuller declarations of the scripture to which it refers, and of which it is a summary.

Thus, the "NAME" of Jesus includes whatever is peculiar to him as the Saviour of sinners: ex. gr. the doctrine of his *person*; of his *righteousness*; of his *sacrifice*; of his *intercession*; of his *authority*—briefly, of his *fulness*, as the fountain of all that grace which his redeemed receive now, and of all that glory which they shall enjoy hereafter. Therefore in the scriptural, which is the only true sense, no man can name his blessed name without cherishing the faith of those cardinal truths which relate to his character and work.

"*Calling*," upon the name of the Lord Jesus is equivalent to such a profession of faith in him as contains the embracing him in his saving offices—bearing testimony to his cause and cross—waiting upon him in his ordinances—addressing him in acts of direct worship—submitting to his authority—and keeping his commandments. *Let every one*, says Paul, *who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* This is our great practical test. They who are without the *doctrine* of Christ, must not, indeed, presume to talk of their *virtues:*

But, on the other hand, they who do not glorify him as "made of God unto them *sanctification*, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts," and studying to be "holy in all manner of conversation," can derive no true comfort from their doctrinal accuracy; nor be allowed to plead it as a valid title to sacramental fellowship. "Faith without works is *dead*," in the judgment of both God and man.

If, therefore, a professed Christian shall reject truths, or vent errours, affecting the substance of the gospel; or shall dishonour it by a wicked life, he is a subject of the punitive discipline of the church; and, by the law of Christ, is to be shut out from the communion of the faithful till he acquire a sounder mind, and be recovered from the snare of the devil.

About these things there can be little difference of opinion. All the churches concerned in the present disquisition have, evidently, when they explain themselves, the same view of what is meant by "calling on the name of the Lord Jesus." So that by extending our communion to such as answer this description, wherever they are found, we incur no danger of throwing open the sanctuary of God to every or to any intruder. It is very possible that a grievous backslider from both truth and duty may yet retain that "seed of God" which abideth forever; and be, at the very time of his scandal, a believer in heart; and one who shall, eventually, "see the Lord." Such was *Noah*; such was *Lot*; such was *David*; such was *Peter*. If it is the same with others, so much the better for themselves. But the church having no power to "search the heart and try the reins of the children of men," can look only "on the outward appearance." Whatever an applicant for her communion may be in the sight of God, he is not, he cannot be, a Christian in her sight, unless he *visibly* maintain the faith, and keep the commandments, of Jesus Christ. She has nothing to do with his secret state. In this matter she is to believe only what she can see; or rather is to give credit for what she cannot see, only on account of what she can. Christianity of the heart, unattested by Christianity of the mouth in "a good confession," and of the life, in "fruit unto holiness," is, to her, no Christianity at all.

The second objection, then, viz. that our holding communion with Christians *as such*; that is, purely on account of their being Christians, cuts down the hedge of discipline, and exposes the house of God to defilement, is without foundation.

III. It is supposed, and asserted that "by holding communion with members of churches in which there exist corruptions or abuses, we do virtually approve such abuses or corruptions; and do thereby make ourselves partakers of other men's sins."

Where is the church which has no corruptions, no abuses? nothing to correct? Let us speak out, and say that we ought never to communicate but with the members of a *perfect* church! For every thing which falls short of perfection is an abuse, is a corruption. And, as the rule works both ways, other churches should not, by our own argument, tolerate communion with us whose claim to perfection is not quite indisputable. What a spectacle would this be! What a spectacle is it already, in the eyes of God, of angels, and of men! A number of churches all wearing the name, pleading the authority, possessing substantially the faith, pretending to cherish the spirit, to imitate the example, and to promote the kingdom, of their Redeemer, refusing to hold communion with each other on account of their respective corruptions!! Truth, open thy closed lips and speak out. Say—and let the world hear it—Say, that in the bosom of the church of God there is found a feeling and a reasoning, the real tendency of which is to shew that there ought to be no sacramental fellowship between Christians of different names under any possible circumstances; and that the whole doctrine of his word concerning the communion of his church, beyond the limits of a particular sect, is a mere deception—a mockery of words without meaning!

This might be, and in itself is, a sufficient answer. But as the objection is a favourite one; and calculated to perplex the tender conscience, it merits a more thorough sifting.

It presents two cases;

First, members of other churches communicating with us.

Secondly, our members communicating with other churches. The principle, however, of both cases being the same, they shall be considered together.

The argument, then, is this;

"We can neither admit to our sacramental table members of other churches, nor ourselves participate in theirs, because there are things in their constitution or practice which we must account to be corruptions; so that by holding communion with them, in either form, we should, by implication at least, approve what it is our duty to condemn; and thus bring sin upon our own souls."

If this reasoning is correct; if the conclusion fairly follows from the premises, a man must be blind not to see, that, out of our own sect, there is not now, and never has been, a church with which, or with a single member of which, we can or could have lawful communion. The purest churches, the holiest of saints, the most gallant sons of the truth—reformers, martyrs, apostles, are all under the ban of this terrible proscription; all sink under one fell stroke of this desolating scythe! For not a church can be named from the present hour back to the first age, which had no corruptions to condemn. And is it, indeed, come to this, that neither *Romaine* nor *Hervey*; neither *Baxter* nor *Bates*, nor *Calamy*, nor *Howe*, nor *Owen*, nor *Usher*, nor *Rutherford*—not *Daillé* nor *Claude*; not *Hooper*, nor *Ridley*, nor *Latimer*, nor *Cranmer*—not *Luther*, not *Calvin*, nor *Knox*, nor *Melancthon*, nor *Zuinglius*; nor *Huss*, nor *Wickliffe*—no, nor yet *Athanasius*, nor *Augustine*, nor *Cyprian*, nor *Irenæus*, nor *Ignatius*, nor *Polycarp*, nor *Clemens*; not even *Timothy*, or *Titus*, or *Paul*, or *John*—not one on the whole list of evangelical worthies, from the martyr *Stephen* down to the missionary *Vander Kemp*, could be permitted, were he on earth, to take a seat with US, at the table of the Lord? For they were all in churches more or less corrupted; some of them corrupted grievously!

And what, let me ask, what, upon such terms, was the condition of God's witnesses for truth during their struggle with Papal Rome, *before they* "came out of her?" Until their separation the church of God was in her. If the objection is sound, no person could lawfully communicate with any of her members: that is to say, *God's own witnesses could not lawfully communicate with his own church!*

I have not forgotten the usual distinction between a *reforming* and a *declining* church: although it does not seem strong enough to bear all the weight which has been laid upon it. It is passed over here, not only because the church of Rome, for centuries of the period referred to, was growing worse and worse in a state of accelerated apostasy, but also because the objection is equally conclusive against communion with a church *in any state whatever*, so long as she retains things which it would be sinful to approve. Let us, therefore, press it a little farther.

If communion with a church is to be interpreted as an approbation of *her* sins, then, by the same rule, communion with an individual is to be interpreted as an approbation of *his* sins. And so the communion of saints is cut up by the roots.

It avails nothing to say, that "as the sacramental supper is the act of a church in her social character, we do, by the very fact of communion with her, acknowledge her as a *whole;* and thus, by implication at least, put the seal of our approbation to whatever belongs to her *as a church.*"

The difficulty is precisely where it was. I must also take an individual as a whole. His communicating is an act of the whole man. If I cannot, for the purposes of communion, separate the divine ordinances in a church from her corruptions, how can I thus separate the graces of a Christian from his sins? If by communion with her in God's ordinances, I must participate in her corruptions also, how can I commune with a believer in his faith and love, and not participate in the "sin that dwelleth in him?" Let your objection set out from any point, on any course, it cuts up, in its progress, all communion of saints by the very roots.

2. If communicating, as a guest, with another church, involves an approbation of her sins, by the same rule communicating with my own church involves an approbation of hers, and renders me by so much the more inexcusable, by how much a *transient* act of intercourse with a church in her corruptions whether great or small, is less culpable than that *regular* and *habitual intimacy* with her which is unavoidable by her members. And so we come again to the old result; viz. that there can be no lawful church-com-

munion upon earth: with this addition, that the most exceptionable and criminal form in which it can possibly exist, is communion with *one's own church while a corruption or abuse can be found in her skirts.*

In order to evade this conclusion, good and sensible men have resorted to a distinction of which the soundness is more than doubtful.

They say, that "what may be wrong in our own "church is always supposed to be under our own "government. As members of our own church, "we must always have some degree of influence "over our own government: and as it is our duty "to exercise this influence, whatever it may be, at "all times and to its utmost extent; we may at all "times indulge the hope of having that wrong or "those wrongs rectified. But with respect to the "errours, or defects, or corruptions, of other "churches, till we become actual members, we "can indulge no such hopes."

This reply, instead of destroying the conclusion against which it is levelled, does, in fact, surrender the objection it was brought forward to defend. That objection was and is, that by the act of communion with an erroneous or corrupted church we patronise her errours or corruptions, i. e. we contract pollution from *contact* with a polluted society. But the contact cannot be the less close, nor the pollution less contagious from the circumstance of the society being our own. Thence it follows that communion here, on account of its intimacy and extent, is worse than any where else, while there is any wrong to be rectified among ourselves. No, says the reply; "We have influence, we have control over our own defects"—therefore—what? Why truly, "we are *not* involved in the sin of our own church by our communion with her." No other inference can repel the conclusion to which the objection was driven. But the whole ground is changed: and it is *now* asserted that our contamination does not proceed from *communion* with a corrupted church; but from our *inability to purify her!* Here then, I repeat, is an absolute surrender of the objection which was to have been defended. And the reply contains this curious doctrine, that vices which we *cannot* cure spread their leprosy over us by contact; but vices we *can* cure, do not. And that the shortest way of escaping the charge of being partakers in other men's sins, is to go over to their church: and then, as *members*, we shall have influence in reforming her!

But can we seriously persuade ourselves by such a reason, that we may safely communicate at home though not abroad? Shall a man keep at a prudent distance from the fire on his neighbour's hearth because he has no rightful control over it; and thrust his naked foot fearlessly into the fire on his own, because he has a well at his door and may extinguish it when he pleases? Shall he avoid the dirt of his neighbour's premises and wade through the mire of his own, because he can cleanse the one and not the other? Will his fire or his filth be so charmed by his metaphysicks or his rights, as that the one shall not burn nor the other defile him? And shall the mere *capacity of influencing* the reformation of a church, so neutralize the poison of her sins as that it shall be harmless to her *members*, while it continues deleterious and may be mortal to her *guests?* Let us not deceive our souls with vain words. There is ground to fear that notions such as have now been combatted, quiet the consciences of many who might else be roused; and compose them securely to sleep under abuses which would startle them in others. They are pleased with dreaming of a power which they never exercise. They *can* rectify the faults of their own church but *do not.* And thus year slips away after year; and life after life: reformation is loudly called for, and the delay of it severely chided, every where but——at home! A church which needs *no* reform is yet a desideratum: and a church fairly and honestly setting about the work of her *own* reformation, is a glory not of this hemisphere. In truth, human passions are so unmanageable in nothing, as in what relates to human sins. Let any man make the experiment, and he shall find that to touch abuses which have become incorporated with the *habits* of society, is to kindle a flame of the most fierce and inextinguishable resentments. It is, therefore, perfectly wild to place the lawfulness of communion with our own church, and the unlawfulness of it with another, upon the footing of our having some *influence* over the former and none over the latter.

It must be some strange mistake, some potent illusion, which can have persuaded worthy and sensible men to adopt such an objection to Catholick communion; and a more than common distress in maintaining it, which could reduce them to so feeble a defence, as have now been exposed. What is it? Shortly and simply this—

Taking it for granted, that communion with a CHURCH *or with her* MEMBERS, *implies our approbation of her in all things belonging to her* ACTUAL CONDITION *as an organized body.*

We have seen above, that, on such a principle, society cannot exist. But, happily, the whole world being judge, the principle assumed is false. For it might be shewn to contradict the practical understanding of men in all the modifications of their intercourse.

The true and only safe rule of interpreting social communion is, that it always goes so far as the *acts* which express it; but is not, *necessarily*, to be considered as extending further.

This rule is of inspired authority. *If any of them that believe not*, says Paul, *bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go: whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you,* "This is offered in sacrifice unto idols," *eat not.*[*]

The apostle here resolves a case of conscience: viz. *A Pagan invites his Christian neighbour to an entertainment. May he lawfully accept the invitation?*

The inviter sustains a threefold character—as a *host*—as an *infidel*—and as an *idolater.* Thus situated, he asks his Christian friend to eat with him? "What shall I do?" "Go," says the apostle, "if you be so inclined." "But how shall I conduct myself with regard to my food; as, in all probability, some of the dishes will be made up of flesh that has been sacrificed to idols?" "Raise no scruples," rejoins the apostle. "You were invited to *dine*—you *go* to dine. Your communion with your host is neither in his

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[*] 1. Cor. x. 27.

infidelity nor his *idolatry*, but simply in his *dinner.*" "What! if part of that dinner has been offered to idols?" "That is no concern of yours. The creature is in itself good; it is God's creature: it was granted to you for food—its blood having been shed before an idol's altar injures the flesh no more than if it had been shed in the slaughter-house. You have nothing to do with it but as *meat.* Receive it with thankfulness, and ask no questions." "But if my host should *tell* me, 'this meat is a sacrifice to his idol-god?'" "The case is entirely altered. There is a new condition introduced. You are now invited to fellowship not only in meat, but in idolatry also. Your course is plain. Eat not—not a mouthful: or you are a partaker in your neighbour's sin."

The doctrine of the apostle relieves us at once from the difficulty started by the objection under review, and furnishes us with a sure and easy rule of conscience in regard to church-fellowship, viz. *No particular act of communion is to be interpreted as reaching beyond* ITSELF, *unless it be coupled with other acts by an* EXPRESS *or* KNOWN *condition.*

If, therefore, I sit down at the table of the Lord in another church, or receive one of her members to that holy table in my own, neither my act nor his can fairly be construed as more than an act of communion in "the body and blood of the Lord." Neither of us has, by virtue of that act, any thing to do with the defects of our respective churches in other matters. "There are errours in doctrine"—you cry—"there are corruptions in worship—there is unscriptural government—there is neglect of discipline!"

Be it so. Are these declensions such as consist with "*holding the* HEAD?" If not, I have fallen in with a "synagogue of Satan." And the question has no reference to communion with Satan or his synagogues. If they are; then is a seat at the Lord's table *declared* or *understood* to be a sign of my *approving* them? If it is, Paul has decided for me. The table to *me* is not the table of the Lord. But if there is no such condition, the sins of my fellow-worshippers are their own: and shall not stand in the way of my testimony to *Christ my passover crucified for me.*

"But if by communicating with a church you do not acknowledge all that belongs to her, what do you acknowledge?" Much, very much. I acknowledge her to be a church, a true church of Jesus Christ—I acknowledge her sacramental table for his own ordinance; where it is my duty to shew forth his death, and my privilege to look for a blessed experience of its benefits—This, all this, I acknowledge: acknowledge cheerfully; and can do it without following her directly or indirectly in those things in which she does not follow Christ.

Instead, therefore, of the sacraments being *party-ordinances* among Christians; i. e. ordinances in which we bind ourselves to a *sect*; they are precisely those which are divested of every sectarian quality and mark—those whose place is emphatically in the *church-catholick* as such; and which it is impossible, without profane violence, to carry over the threshold of any sectarian temple whatever. Yes, the holy table is the badge of no party but the party of the Son of God. It is here that they who "know his name and put their trust in him," may and should unite their homage to his cross and their fealty to his service, upon the broad and glorious ground of his having "loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood." This is the place where *Christians* are not to *put on*, but to *put off*, the *sectarian*, and to say each to his brother, "*Beloved, let us* LOVE *one another; for love is of* GOD."

Long as this article is, it cannot be finished without removing another difficulty. "If we are thus to hold communion with visible Christians and Christian churches, how shall we obey the scriptures?" What scriptures? "All those which require us to *keep ourselves pure*—To *have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness—to come* *out and be separate*—especially, to *withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly.*" The answer is short. All such scriptures are misapplied. Commandments to separate from *idolatry*—from the *world which lieth in wickedness*—from the *mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*—from fellowship with men of any sort *in their sins*, are indeed abundant, plain, and peremptory. But a commandment for one believer whose conversation is as becometh the gospel, to refuse communion with another—for one church of the Lord Jesus to refuse communion with another—such a commandment is not in the Bible, nor any thing like it. The commandments of Christ, as has been proved above, are all of a contrary complexion. He does not *enjoin*, he *forbids* such a refusal.

The passage from 2 Thess. iii. 6, *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our* LORD JESUS CHRIST, *that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which ye received of us*, has met with peculiar hardships. Modern separatists plead it as a direct warrant for their separation; and they may all plead it with equal propriety. In the primitive church, however, it was quoted the other way—*against* the separatists; and quoted as being decisive for their condemnation. Not they who *held*, but they who *declined* to hold communion with other Christians and churches, were branded as the "disorderly brethren."* Both interpretations cannot be right, although both may be wrong. And it would be somewhat amusing, yet a little melancholy, if the text, instead of being on both sides, should after all be on neither. Let us see.

The word rendered "disorderly," and its relatives, occur but four times in the New Testament, and three of them are in this chapter. They describe the character and conduct of certain professors who availed themselves of the church's bounty to live in idleness, and employed their leisure in disturbing their neighbours. Thus Paul has explained his own meaning, v. 11. *For we hear*, says he, *that there are some which walk* DISORDERLY *among you;* WORKING NOT AT ALL, *but are* BUSY-BODIES. This he resented as a reproach to the Christian calling; adding, v. 12. "*Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they* WORK, *and eat* THEIR OWN BREAD." And by way of stimulating them to honest industry, he reminds the Thessalonians of an order he had passed when he was with them, viz. that no lazy professor of religion should receive any support from the publick charity: which is the import of the * command," that *if any would not* WORK, *neither should he* EAT.

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* CYPRIAN. *De unit. eccles.* p. 119.

From such "disorderly" persons the Thessalonians were charged to "withdraw;" and the duty of Christians in similar cases, is still the same, But how?

The charge was addressed to the Thessalonians either in their publick or their private character—either as a church, or as individuals. If the former, it is a charge to have no church-communion with the offender—if the latter, to discountenance him by avoiding personal intimacy.

That it is not the former; i. e. not a charge to withhold church communion seems clear, for the following reasons.

1st. The *terms* are entirely different from those which the scripture elsewhere uses in regard to church-fellowship.

2d. A church, in her collective capacity, does not *withdraw herself* from communion with an offender; she authoritatively *puts him away* from *her* communion. 1 Cor. v. 13.

3d. The "withdrawing," here enjoined, was to be a means of bringing the disorderly brother to a sense of his misbehaviour, and a compliance with the apostle's mandate for abandoning his idle and impertinent habits: in case of disobedience, he was to be *reported* to the apostle for ulterior judgment: and, in the mean time his brethren were to "have no company with him." v. 14. Therefore he was still in communion.

4th. Even after this "withdrawing"—this "reporting"—this "having no company with him," he was "not to be accounted as an enemy, but to be admonished as a brother."

The alternative is, that Paul speaks of private and familiar intercourse. His terms apply to this exactly—The word rendered, "have company," is found but twice more in the new New Testament, it is both times in his own writings, and both times in that sense. He is, then, directing the Thessalonian Christians how to vindicate the worthy name whereby they were called, in their private carriage toward the "disorderly brother;" with a view to prevent the necessity of more coercive measures. They were to shew their disapprobation and grief by a reserve and distance, marking a strong contrast with the usual open, frank, and affectionate character of Christian society. This was a gentle, and delicate, but plain and pungent reproof; calculated to sting a man of any ingenuous feeling to the very heart.

They were to press upon him the apostolick injunction; and to observe whether or not, when seconded by their own example and carriage, it was likely to produce any good effect.

If he resisted these milder proceedings, they were to decline his company altogether; but to leave with his conscience a friendly and faithful admonition of his sin, of his disgrace, and of his peril—that, if possible, he might be brought to an honest shame, and a complete reformation.

See how careful and cautious the great apostle was in every thing affecting either the glory of his master, or the feelings and privileges of his fellow Christians. He knew, on the one hand, no compromise with sin; but, on the other, he knew nothing of that summary process of suspension and excommunication by which it has been fashionable in some churches both to indulge the lust of the lash, and to get rid of further trouble with offending members.

See also, how he has taught Christians in their private capacity to maintain the dignity of their profession—to be ministers of purity to each other—and to aid in supporting the order of the house of God.

But how does all this enjoin or justify our refusing the fellowship of Christians whom we own as "brethren in the Lord;" and of churches which we own as having his truth? The scripture has said "Withdraw from thriftless, meddling, mischief-making religionists;" *therefore*, my "beloved brother"—*therefore*, respected churches of Jesus Christ, whosoever and whatsoever ye be that go not under *my* sectarian name—I can have no communion with *you!!* Who that pretends to reason, will so gamble with his own understanding—who that pretends to love, can so slander his own heart, as to adopt such a monstrous "*therefore?*"

But we have not yet done. The objection dies hard. It has been, it is, and will be insisted on, that the *principle* of Paul's decision is general; and that there is as good reason for "withdrawing" from a *church*, as from "a *brother* that walketh disorderly." Agreed. But you are no nearer your point than before. Because we are not to have intercourse with a church that "walks disorderly," does it follow that we are to hold no communion with any church or church-members, but our *own?* with any that have defects and blemishes? This inference is as monstrous as the other. It is very certain that Paul did not thus understand himself: For both his doctrine and practice, as every page of his history shews, were of a different sort. Did he say to the Christians of his time, "the churches of Corinth, of Rome, of Galatia are 'disorderly;' and you must have no communion with them or with their members?" No such thing. Yet *we*, directly in the face of apostolick principle and precedent, *we* seize upon an ungracious term; we apply it without ceremony to the churches around; and then shelter our sects and our schisms under the authority of the scripture! We do in effect say, that the Lord Jesus has commanded his people to break up his church into shreds and fragments; and to have no communion with each other; upon the pretext, alike convenient for them all, that they "walk disorderly!"

But have we well considered what we are doing when we brand a Christian or a Christian church as *disorderly?* Have we weighed the sense, have we measured the opprobrium, of that epithet? Have we remembered that as used by the apostle it marks a character utterly inconsistent with the power of true religion? a character which dishonours the name of the Lord Jesus? And are we prepared to judge thus of all the Christians and churches whose communion we shun?

Unveil thy face, O TRUTH, lift up thy voice, and shake thy hand! Not the law of God—not scriptural interpretation—not the spirit of brotherly-kindness—but Ignorance, but Jealousy, but Vanity, but Passion, but Pride, occupy the seat of Judgment, and fulminate the charge, "*Disorderly*," against individuals and churches in whom the "Refiner's fire" may find less dross to "purge away" than in their self-pleased accusers. Here is the mischief. Every one accounts *that* to be *order* which he has himself been accustomed to practise: and whoever does not move precisely in *his* track, "walks disorderly."

The question concerning a church, in order to communion, ought to be, "What is her *substantial* character? Has she the truth, the ordinances, the Spirit, of Christ? Does she own "the Head," and the Head own her? Then whatever be her failings, I too will own her. I shall condemn them, lament them, pray over them, and bear with them. I will not quarrel with her about forms, about ceremonies, about any of those points in which our disagreement does not prevent us from being one in our Lord Jesus Christ. For the sake of that transcendant common interest I will walk with her in love and fellowship." And thus it was once. But all is reversed now.

The question is no longer about *substance*, but about *accident*—not about those vital principles and virtues which constitute the solid glory of a church, and are the seal of God's own Spirit; but about imperfections which yet do neither destroy their being, nor hinder their predominance: and especially about those things in which she differs from our own *peculiarities*. Here is the huge stumbling-block—the inexpiable transgression. One of our churches breaks her sacramental bread in company with a sister-church, where the "Spirit of grace" sheds down his holiest influence—where the gospel "has a free course and is glorified"—where the "image of the FIRST-BORN," throws its radiance around; and "love of the brethren" flows from heart to heart till the swelling tide burst forth in streams of hallowed transport; and the scene compels that reverential testimony, "How venerable is this place! Surely this is none other than the house of God! and this is the gate of Heaven!" "But with whom has she taken this 'sweet counsel.' Do they follow *us*?" "Alas, no! they only follow Christ!" The charm is dissolved—They are a "disorderly" church: Their communion is foul! O my soul, how shall these things appear when GOD arises to judgment?

IV. It is contended, that free communion "by giving publick countenance to churches erroneous or corrupt, destroys the force, or at least shackles the freedom of a faithful testimony for Christ and his truth."

If that publick countenance which is given to a church by communion with her, were of course a publick countenance to her errours or corruptions, the objection would be unanswerable. For it would be with the worst imaginable grace that a man could remonstrate against sins which he openly encourages by his own example. But such is not the fact, as was largely proved in the preceding article. And it is surprising that they who make the objection do not perceive that, like the former, it strikes, with double force, at communion with our own church so long as an errour or corruption adheres to her. For if occasional and partial fellowship with a church is to shut the mouth, or diminish the boldness, of our testimony against her faults; much more will that be the effect of a fellowship complete and permanent. And so in its zeal for *pure* communion, this objection would banish *all* communion from the face of the earth!

But that the reply may be more direct and ample, let us strip the objection of its form and examine its substance—its principle. This manifestly is, that *friendship and intimacy are incompatible with proper admonition!* What say *Nature* and *Experience?* Who may, with the least hazard of displeasing, take the greatest liberty of expostulation and rebuke? One who treats me coldly, who avoids my company, and spurns an invitation to a meal in my house? or one who is kind, sociable, affectionate in his intercourse with me?

There can be but one answer; and that answer is in every man's bosom. If you hope that I shall profit by your *reproofs*, you must convince me of your *love*. I will listen with candour and submission to a friend who avails himself of his known regard for me to tell me my faults frankly, yet tenderly, with an evident concern for my improvement: while resentment, resistance, and recrimination will probably reward the officiousness which has no claim to such a freedom, and delights to mortify if not to expose me. It is human nature, in the child and in the man—in the individual and in society: and all human experience attests it.

Nothing, therefore, could be more unfortunate than this objection. The very contrary is the truth. They who respect a church; who honour in her the ordinances of Jesus Christ, get an access to her confidence which will be denied to others. They acquire, by their affection, a right which she will concede, to point out wherein she "walks not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel:" and they are likely, in this way if at all, to be instrumental in doing her good. Acknowledge, commend, rejoice in, her excellencies; and you may speak to her freely, perhaps effectually, of her deficiencies.*

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* This is after the example of Christ himself. *Rev.* ii. 12—17.

Such a temper and treatment would, indeed, be irreconcilable with the notions, feelings, and conduct which are but too common. They would put out of countenance those Pharisaical, nauseating panegyricks which many are so fond of lavishing upon "OUR CHURCH"—They would smother the noise of the brawler; would spoil the trade of ecclesiastical talebearers; would reduce to their proper insignificance the busybodies whom strife makes important; would absolutely strike dead those petty hostilities which irritated sectarians keep alive for the pleasure, one would suppose, of having something to fight about—But they would create a pause, a calm, in which might be heard the voice of that celestial "wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of compassion and of good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

Let us lay aside disguise. The antipathies and collisions of evangelical churches form the most detestable warfare which the devil has contrived to kindle in our miserable world. And the worst of all is his success in persuading multitudes of honest men, that in carrying on the contest of their own sinful passions, they are "doing valiantly" for the cause of God. And that when, instead of admiring the general symmetry and healthful appearance of other Christian bodies, they are keen, vigilant, incessant, in looking for a freckle, a wart, or a festering finger—when they open their ears to every slander—when they are extenuating all that is good in their neighbour, and magnifying all that is bad—when they are giving, with much satisfaction, shrewd hints that may leave a sting in his soul—when they are preaching at him, and praying at him; pouring out the gall of their animosity in the very presence of God, and before the throne of his grace—they are bearing *a faithful testimony for Christ and his truth!* Whether he shall himself so account of it, is another question.

This system has been tried long, and it never did any good yet. It has reformed none, convinced none, enlightened none. Let it be given up, and its opposite adopted. Let us shew our fellow Christians that we embrace them in the bowels of Jesus Christ—that we do not consider "the children's bread" on their table as "cast to the dogs." And let us shew it not by professions, but by fact—let us eat of their bread when they invite us; and welcome them, in turn, to eat of our own. One year of love will do more towards setting us mutually right where we are wrong, than a millenium of wrangling.

V. It is asserted, that "general communion among visible Christians will not only diminish the value, but impeach the propriety of all that service which, in every age, the churches of God have rendered to pure and undefiled religion by their judicial confessions of faith." More briefly thus; "Catholick communion subverts confessions of faith."

It would be marvellous indeed, if God's own people could not maintain a testimony for *him*, without disunion among themselves!! The whole corps of infidels put together is unable to produce so conclusive an argument against the Christian religion as a practical system. But let us take heed how we strengthen their hands by granting their assumptions—how we confound a testimony for God and his truth with a testimony for ourselves and our peculiarities. Were it so; were confessions of faith designed to be the shibboleths, the symbols, the flags, of religious, or rather *irreligious*, factions—challenges to battle among believers—wedges of dissention to split the church of Christ into pieces, the objection would be solid.

Admitting, however, the general unity of Christians in those things which immediately concern their common hope, it would prove, not that catholick communion is improper; but that confessions are what some represent them to be, mere nuisances: and, in that case, every "son of peace" would labour for their destruction. But if they are intended, as indeed they are, to proclaim wherein believers differ from the carnal world; and to be luminous rallying points of their strength and efforts in their conflict with the enemies of our Lord and of his Christ; it is inconceivable how they should interfere with the broadest Christian fellowship, or the broadest Christian fellowship with them. Even those particulars in which they might vary from each other, would but serve to set off, in the finest and most consolatory manner, the superiour worth and glory of their higher agreements; and furnish a suitable occasion for the exercise of that forbearance which is indispensable to "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Certain it is that neither the Apostolick nor the Reformed churches found their confessions to be at war with their communion. The former studiously avoided, in their "symbols" of the faith, those inferiour matters about which opinions and practice clashed then not less than now: wisely confining their testimony to the substantial truths of revelation; and turning their united forces against those substantial heresies which, by sapping the foundations of the common salvation, aimed at the overthrow of the common interest.

The multiplied and essential corruptions of Popery called for corresponding confessions in the Reformed churches. But these, instead of putting them asunder, brought them together; and were the very ground of their confidence, communion, and co-operation. The *Lutheran* church formed an unhappy exception: and even that exception would not have existed, had the spirit of her illustrious founder continued to pervade her councils.

On this point many of my readers will be startled by what they will think a very strange assertion. It is, nevertheless, true; and is an induction from facts of which a number has been already detailed. It is, that the churches most sound in the faith, most correct in their order, most pure in their worship, were also the most liberal in their communion. Inquire at the mouth of history, who, from the dawn of the Reformation down to the Westminster Assembly, united the most faithful testimony to Christ with the most fervent charity to Christians? Who were most full in their confession of the truth, and most catholick in their views of church-communion? Her answer is, They were the *Calvinists*—they were the *Presbyterians!*

But allowing the objection to have much greater weight than it has, when applied to churches whose confessions do not perfectly harmonize, how it is applicable to those who are organized under *one and the same* confession? This is the case of several churches on both sides of the Atlantick, which yet have no inter-communion. *They* can surely make no use of it against each other.

Before we quit the subject of "confessions of faith," it may be proper to notice a mistake, which is growing more and more prevalent, concerning their intention and use: I mean in their present amplitude. They are supposed, and in some instances, are declared, to contain *the terms of church-communion*; i. e. the terms upon which, and upon which alone, an individual can be admitted into church-fellowship. There are good reasons for doubting whether such an opinion is correct, and such a declaration discreet.

To prevent misconceptions, the authour would observe, once for all, that no man is more thoroughly convinced than himself of the propriety, utility, and necessity of publick confessions of faith; nor is less moved by the argumentations of their adversaries. But whether, like other good things, they are not liable to abuse—whether they have not actually been abused—and whether the application professed to be made of them, at this moment, in some churches, is not an abuse, may be worth considering.

As the "fixed testimony" of a church, "by which her principles are to be tried;" or as her "judicial expression of the sense in which she understands the Holy Scriptures in their relation to the Doctrine, Government, and Worship of the Christian church," when these things are matters of controversy, it is difficult to conceive how a confession of her faith can be dispensed with. She must proclaim what she believes, and means to teach. This is her confession of faith; and is put into the hands of her officers to be by them inculcated and supported. Nothing can be more absurd than to employ as preachers and guardians of her religion, men who, for aught she knows, may labour to subvert the whole system which she is endeavouring to build up. She has, therefore, a right, and it is her duty, on the ground of self-preservation, as well as of fidelity to her king, to exact from them an explicit avowal of their belief on all those topics which more nearly or remotely affect the main interests of truth: and a positive, unequivocating engagement to maintain them. For this purpose she must bring them to a *test*; which can be done so effectually in no form as that of requiring an approbation of her confession. The security is not indeed perfect: as some men will make any profession whatever for lucre, for distinction, or for convenience: and as the convictions of others may really alter. But it is the best which can be adopted. It keeps the recreant always within her grasp; and it is her own fault if, with such a control, she allows him to poison the "wells of salvation," or to pollute their streams. In her confession of faith, then, are strictly and indispensably, her terms of *official* union.

But are these same terms to regulate *private* communion? When they go beyond the elementary doctrines of the gospel—when they are expanded into a comprehensive system of Theology, as in the Westminster Confession, ought they to be proposed for approbation, in all their latitude, to every one who desires baptism for his children, or a seat at the table of the Lord?

The reader is entreated not to be stumbled at an answer which may thwart his prepossessions; but to listen and reflect before he pronounces. The answer is, No.

1. Because such was not the *original design* of the Protestant confessions.

They were intended to raise and to display a banner for the truth of Christ which had been foully depraved, as by others, so especially by the man of sin. And while they contained all those and practice of the church of Scotland before the Secession.

3. Because they *cannot* be, in effect, terms of Christian communion.

You may *declare* them to be so: You may pass Synodical acts for that purpose. And thus the Westminster Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Form of Church-government, and Directories for worship, are *declaratively* and *legally* terms of permanent communion or membership in the Associate Reformed church. But declarations and acts of Synod cannot alter the nature of things; nor make that to be practicable which in itself is impracticable. Not only the attainments, but the faculties of the mass of mankind must be different from what they ever have been before such extensive terms of communion can be enforced. It belongs not to church-power to "call things that be not as though they were." Will a discreet man suppose that every plain Christian who knows enough for his salvation, and has learned to "glorify God in his body and his spirit," can also be acquainted with the whole doctrine of those standards? A work which occupied for years the care and study of a body of divines second to none in the world? which has condensed the literature and labour of their lives; and covers the whole ground of didactick and polemick Theology? Is it a reasonable expectation that every plain Christian, however unlettered, should be able to grasp a work like this? to distinguish its numerous propositions; and to fathom their sense? How many private members of our churches, our best and most exemplary members, could abide such an ordeal? Speculative zeal, which is always for carrying matters with a high hand, and is never more confident than when most in the wrong, may shut her eyes and stop her ears—but the practical understanding revolts. Conscience and common sense, when they came into contact with facts, have always flinched from the fair application of such theoretical tests. I say *theoretical* tests; for in the case before us they are not carried into effect by their most strenuous advocates. When a common person offers them his name as a disciple of Jesus Christ, do they so much as *pretend* to measure his knowledge by the height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of their publick standards? They do not—not a man of them. If they did, and were to reject the deficient, they might resign their houses of worship to the bats at once. There would be no place for one Christian in ten thousand. And were their example universal, not a church of God would be left standing from the rising to the setting sun. They act very differently, and far more wisely. They receive their members upon a credible profession of faith in Christ; and in their inquiries into this profession, they *never* go into the *details* of their own standards. Those truths which they distinctly propose, and of which they require a confession, are, then, their *real* and their *only* practical test: and be it what it may, larger or less, they do and must, in their administration of the ordinances, naturally and necessarily cut down their standards to that size.

Therefore, sacramental communion on those vital principles which characterize the people of God in every age and country, is not inconsistent with the most perfect confessions of faith; nor does it all interfere with their proper use.

VI. It is alleged that "as communion presupposes, and is founded upon, union; it is a contradiction to hold communion with churches with which we are not united: and, therefore, all such communion is inconsistent with distinct ecclesiastical organization."

The premises are granted: the conclusions denied. Communion is indisputably an act and expression of union. And it is on this very ground that the reciprocal communion of Christians and Christian churches is asserted to be both their privilege and duty. They *are* united—they are *one.*

They are one in interests infinitely more valuable, they are united in bonds infinitely more strong, than all the other interests which subdivide them; and all the other bonds which unite their subdivisions. For *sectarian* communion you must indeed be united in a *sect;* for *Christian* communion, you must be united in *Christ*. Therefore, according to the objection itself, if unity of sect be a sufficient reason for all sectarian communion, unity in Christ is a sufficient reason for all Christian communion. This is *our* plea; and we cannot be grieved at hearing it from the mouth of an opponent.

But the objection goes further, and maintains that sections of the one church of Christ cannot hold lawful communion with each other, unless they be also united in one external denomination. Do they, who argue thus, perceive that they assume the non-existence of the ONE church of Christ? an entire change in the nature of church fellowship? and the extinction of Christian character and right out of the limits of a particular sect? Upon no other basis can the conclusion rest, that formal union of sects in one and the same organical body, is essential to their Christian fellowship. Were it so indeed, the hand which guides this pen would account itself superlatively honoured in putting the match to a train which should explode under their ramparts and citadels, and so break and shatter and disperse them, that every trace of their existence should disappear from under heaven.

But the fallacy is palpable.

To say that communion is the fruit of union; and thence to argue, that something *more* than Christian union is necessary to Christian communion, is a sophism which can mislead no one who permits himself to think.

Why does not the objector carry his doctrine through, and maintain that communion between members of different congregations is inconsistent with their distinct organization? and that before it can be proper, they must all be melted down into one congregation? If you say that "they are limbs of one larger body, and in virtue of this their union have, and are bound to have, communion with each other;" I take my answer from your own lips, in your own words, and reply, that "the different Christian churches are limbs of that one larger body, the church-catholick; and in virtue of this their union are bound to have communion with each other." A single congregation; an organized portion of a sect comprising several congregations; the sect itself comprising several such portions, are all limbs in their places. That one limb is greater and another less, cannot alter the nature of their relation to their bodies respectively. The principle is one; the analogy perfect; and the conclusion irresistible. This conclusion is, that to maintain the necessity of amalgamating different sects into one sect in order to communion between their members, is to maintain, at the same time, the necessity of amalgamating different congregations into one congregation, in order to communion between their members: And, that there is no argument for the communion of different congregations founded upon their union in one sect, which is not equally good for the communion of the sects themselves on account of their union in one church-catholick.

Christian communion, therefore, may subsist in purity and power between different sections of the church-catholick, without any such union as the objection requires. However desirable such an union be in itself; and how extensively soever it shall be effected when "the Lord shall build up Zion and appear to men in his glory," there is room at least to doubt whether it would *now* be expedient were it even practicable. Practicable and expedient in some degree it probably is at the present hour; and is well worth the consideration of them who perceive "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." On a large scale the churches are not ripe for it. There are opinions, feelings, habits, which must be reduced much nearer than they are to some common standard, before it could be attempted without the danger of doing more harm than good. But this is no reason against the cultivation of friendly intercourse—against what may be called *church-hospitality*—against the most ungrudging fellowship in holy ordinances, as opportunity serves. They who should live very uncomfortably together under the same roof, may yet be excellent neighbours; firm friends; studious in the exchange of kind offices: and their civilities, in process of time, may improve into alliances of mutual benefit.

Under this head, viz. the necessity of union in *sect* as a basis of church-communion, there has been started a difficulty of so singular a cast, that one hardly knows whether to pass it by with a smile, or to give it a serious answer. The former is best merited; the latter more respectful.

It is said, then, that "by admitting to our fellowship persons who are not members of *our* church, we make an unjust and invidious distinction in their favour. Our own members being subjects of our discipline; the others not. So that we exact harder conditions of communion from our own family than we do from strangers."

God has put his chastisements, whereof the discipline of his house administered for edification and not for destruction is a part, among the *privileges* of his people. Art thou not surprised, Christian reader, to hear it mentioned as an *hardship*? I see the blush mantling on thy cheek: and shall spare thee the pain of dwelling on so unseemly an imputation.

But there is a mistake. If by dishonouring their high vocation, your guests should deserve to be excluded from the communion of the faithful, what is to hinder their exclusion from yours? This would be decisive discipline, and as easily exercised towards them, as towards your own members. And whence arose the notion that an offending brother cannot be disciplined by any authority but that of the particular congregation or sect to which he more especially belongs? When he can be referred thither without much inconvenience, it is altogether preferable. But how did he *acquire* a right to transgress with impunity, and be from under the coercion of his master's law, every where but within his own precincts? And when did the church-catholick *lose* the right of restraining a disorderly member by the agency of any one particular church in which he may have enjoyed her communion? No man, whom she has once acknowledged, can free himself from his responsibility in any part of the world. A single act of communion in her peculiar mercies binds him as firmly to her authority as ten thousand. And there can be no reasonable doubt that an individual wearing and disgracing the Christian name, *provided his church-membership be ascertained*, may, according to the statutes of the Redeemer's kingdom, be called to account, reproved, excommunicated, by any Christian church on the spot where he happens to be, even *without an act of formal communion there*; much more then after such an act. Our confusion, perplexity, errours, weakness, unfaithfulness, on this and other great points of Christian order, we owe to our schisms: which, if they have not banished the doctrine, have nearly obliterated the sense, of the church's UNITY.

VII. It is objected that "whatever may have been the condition of primitive times," (in which *church*-communion was *Catholick*-communion,) "the state of the church is so greatly altered as to make the imitation of them inexpedient, if not impracticable, now."

That the imitation is not "impracticable," appears from the complaint against some evangelical churches at New-York and elsewhere—their offence consisting precisely in the fact of such imitation. That it is "inexpedient," is thus far refuted by experience. No measure of more auspicious influence within its sphere was ever adopted. Ask the Christians immediately concerned.

To ground the impropriety of Catholick communion upon the difference between the *present* and *primitive* state of the church, is either to betray lamentable ignorance; or to convert sin into an argument for its own justification.

It has been demonstrated over and over, that there existed in the primitive, and even apostolical church, causes of separation much more weighty than those which some denominations now assign for refusing the communion of others. Yet no separation took place: no communion was refused; except by some who were held to be deserters from the "city of God," and whose "memorial has perished with them."

"But we *are* separated—we *are* broken up into a variety of sects—we have *ceased* from such catholick fellowship; and our circumstances, in this view, are materially different from those of the primitive church"—

True: and the difference is your reproach—your shame—your crime. You have violated the commandment of your Lord and Saviour—you have conspired against the unity of his kingdom—you have lacerated and mangled his glorious body—you have slandered the spirit of his gospel—you have given occasion to his enemies to blaspheme—and you plead this unhallowed condition into which your disobedience has brought you, as a reason for *remaining* in it! No, Sin shall not be its own apology. "We have been *addicted* to falsehood, to knavery, to uncleanness; therefore we may *continue* to be false, knavish, unclean"—is just as good an argument, and will go just as far at the tribunal of God, as, "We have split ourselves up into sects: we have kept away from our Lord's table among his acknowledged disciples: we have shut them out, in our turn, from his table among us—therefore we must go on in our wonted course!" Must you indeed? A rectified conscience would draw quite an opposite inference. It would teach you to say, "The time past of our lives may suffice us to have lived in disunion, suspicion, and strife. Let us now 'search and try our ways,' and endeavour henceforward to 'walk in love as Christ also hath loved us'."

That there are obstacles to be surmounted in forming and executing so divine a purpose, is undeniable. But the greatest of them all is the most sinful—*the want of* LOVE—and therefore the *want of* WILL. Remove *these*, and the rest will vanish almost of their own accord. So the primitive Christians found it: so did the Protestant Reformers: and so have others who cherished, though in a lower degree, their brotherly spirit.

The facts are numerous and stubborn; but the argument from them is evaded by a distinction which must briefly be examined. For it is said,

VIII. That "the sentiments and examples of holy men and evangelical churches in latter days, to which the friends of Catholick communion so confidently appeal, were adapted to *extraordinary circumstances*; and are inapplicable to a regular, settled state of the church."

It is clear as the light, that if this distinction be unsound, its advocates cannot escape from the dilemma of either aspersing those whom they profess to honour, or convicting themselves of schismatical conduct. They ought to have been sure of their ground before they ventured upon it with so valuable a stake. Let us try whether it will bear their weight.

The first thing which strikes us is, that it should represent division, faction, rents, wranglings, as suited to an ordinary, regular, settled state of the church! and should allow nothing but extraordinary circumstances to justify communion among her members of different denominations! That the fellowship of Christians and Christian churches with each other, as such, is disorderly and unlawful, except in *extraordinary circumstances!!* O Saviour, is such *thy* church, and *thy* law?

But "the legs of the lame are not equal." If this distinction is just, what becomes of the plea on which our opposing brethren rest the chief merits of their cause, viz. that by communion with other churches than our own, or with their members, we partake of their sins?

That which is unlawful in itself can never be rendered lawful by circumstances. But all partaking of other men's sins is unlawful in itself. Therefore, if Catholick communion involves such a participation, it is unlawful in itself, and cannot be justified by extraordinary circumstances. Upon this principle the communion of the Protestant churches was a communion in each other's sin!! Which part will our brethren take? Will they give up their main argument against the intercommunion of acknowledged Christians? or will they lay so foul a charge at the door of those glorious men who reformed the church of God at the expense of their heart's blood?

But the Reformers themselves were of another mind. They put the lawfulness or unlawfulness—the propriety or impropriety of church-communion, not upon the footing of ordinary or extraordinary circumstances, but upon the footing of the *common faith*. They did so in their publick confessions, wherein they show what the church is, and ought to be, according to the Scriptures. They laid the foundations of her communion in her unity as the body of Christ. Their practice grew out of their *doctrine*, not out of their *circumstances*. They did not in one breath maintain the *unity* of the church; in another, deny that unity to be a sufficient basis for the communion of her members: then, in the face of their own denial, actually hold such communion; and, to crown all, justify their conduct by their extraordinary circumstances! Such inconsistency, confusion, and contradiction, never disgraced the men whom the "Spirit of judgment and of burning" employed to purify the house of God. Their faith, their profession, and their example corresponded. What they believed they taught; and what they taught they exemplified. Because they believed the church of Christ to be one, their communion embraced her visible members.

One objection is left.—It is said,

IX. That "all Christians being one in spirit, the best ends of communion may be answered in their present state of separation, without the evils incident to its publick extension."

That believers have a spiritual fellowship with each other as living members of the one living body of Christ, is a truth not less full of consolation, than their outward distance and divisions are full of discomfort and shame. But how can this be a substitute for their visible fellowship in ordinances which are designed to display and promote it? A communion with the whole church not to be exemplified! a communion lawful and of high privilege, forbidden to be expressed in that form which the master appointed for the very purpose of expressing it! How is it to be kept up? If one Christian or church may thus commune with another, while the external evidence thereof is not only withheld but prohibited, so may another; so may a thousand others; so may all; and the visible church vanishes from among men! Nay, if the objection before us is of any weight or value whatever, it avails much more than its authours would be willing to accept. Carry it through—Turn Quakers at once—Discard your ministry and your sacraments—Fellowship in *spirit* will answer your best ends. And you will have no more trouble on the subject of church-communion!

PART IV.

It remains to trace the *consequences* of sectarian, as opposed to Catholick, communion.

These may be viewed in relation to ourselves—to the church of God at large—and to the surrounding world.

*To ourselves.**

1st. The first and most obvious consequence is an utter *self-excision or excommunication* from all the rest of Christ's church upon earth.

That such is the fact, it would be illuminating the sun to prove. For if there be on earth Christian churches beside our own; and if we will have no communion with them, to what less does our conduct amount than an open renunciation of all visible concern with them in the kingdom of God? If, indeed, we do not hold them to be Christian churches—if we claim the *sole* possession of that blessed character; and arrogate to ourselves the *exclusive* privilege of being the "General Assembly and Church of the First-

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* The authour speaks in the person of any *sect* which is in the habit of confining its fellowship to its own members.

Born," we may escape from the charge: But if we dare not proceed to such a fearful length, our escape is impossible.

Here then we are, in a state of excommunication: or, if you prefer the term, in a state of non-communion with the church of the living God. Isolated by our own act—under a practical, and in some instances a doctrinal, protest against fellowship with her in ordinances which we enjoy only as a part of the great whole. Yet with the "great whole," we as a part will have no intercourse—will have nothing to do. Is fellowship, then, with the acknowledged church of God—fellowship direct and avowed before angels and men, so vile in our eyes? Are we so lost to all sense of the beauty, efficacy, and glory of the "unity of the Spirit," as to be satisfied with our disunion? and so infatuated as to imagine that in fostering it we are "doing God service?" Shall a church turn her back upon the whole visible interest of the Lord Jesus in the world, by refusing the "right hand of fellowship" to every portion of it but her own—and thus turn her back upon all the manifestations of his power, grace, love, faithfulness, which he there displays, and still hope for his blessing upon herself? hope for his presence, for his Spirit, for that holy "dew" under which she "shall grow as the lily, and cast forth her roots as Lebanon; her branches shall spread, and her beauty shall be as the olive tree, and her smell as Lebanon?" Has she a right in such a temper to hope for such things? Let the question be answered by them who have life enough left to tremble at that word of the Lord, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for "him that a mill-stone were hanged about his "neck, and that he were drowned in the depth "of the sea."

2d. Our sectarian communion stamps the brand of *inconsistency*, and throws an air of *insincerity*, upon our most solemn professions.

We *talk* of the *Catholick* church—of her *unity* —of her *character*—of her *prerogatives;* and yet *act* as if these were unmeaning terms; and all that we have to say of her, an "idle tale." In *words* we found our title to our church-privileges in our union with her—in *deeds* we avoid every publick, social expression of that union, as if it were our dishonour, and might prove to be our ruin. We laud her to the heavens in *theory*: we call her Christ's spouse and our mother—in *practice* we shun her embrace, her touch, her atmosphere *cane pejus et angue;* as if she were a rabid or venomous animal. There is not a room in God's house, a place in his temple, a province in his kingdom, fit for us to inhabit, or even to visit, but the one in which we have been accustomed to dwell. When we spread our table, we call it the *table of the Lord.* We invite *his* friends and prohibit *his* enemies, according to his own rules. But any who should imagine that we mean nothing more than we say—that our invitation is honestly intended for our master's friends; and, acceding to our own declared conditions, should take us at our word, would grievously mistake. They would find that not one in ten thousand of them that "love the Lord Jesus Christ," and endeavour to "walk even as he also walked," comes within our scope—that all our descriptions of *Christians* are only for Christians of *our sect.* Is this "simplicity and godly sincerity?" Are unbelieving eyes shut to the contradiction, or believing hearts untouched by the insult? Be fair at least. Come out openly and tell your hearers, that however your language may *sound*, you mean by the *people of God*, neither more nor less than the *members of your own church!* You startle; you recoil; you sicken. Why? Because the injustice is too flagrant, the inconsistency too gross, to bear the light. And shall we pertinaciously *do*, under cover of a flimsy veil, that which we have not the courage so much as to *look at* when it stands before us with the veil stripped off?

3d. Upon the *individuals* of a sect, their restricted communion exerts an unhappy influence, with regard

To their religious intellect—
To their practical judgment—and
To the direction of their zeal.

Upon the religious *intellect* sectarian feelings and fellowship produce an effect analogous to that of the division of labour upon mechanical ingenuity. By concentrating its operations in a few points, or perhaps in a single one, they render it peculiarly acute and discriminating within those limits, at the expense of enfeebling or destroying its general power. Conversations are cherished; books read; time expended; faculties employed; not for the purpose of acquiring larger views of the Redeemer's truth, grace, kingdom, and glory: but for the purpose of training more accurate disputants upon the heads of sectarian collision. Here men distinguish themselves; here they shine; here they gratify their *vanity*, which they often mistake for their *conscience*: "What difference," exclaimed a zealous member of a nameless judicatory, when he was contending for a 'testimony' over and above the recognised confession of faith, "what difference will there be between you and the General Assembly, if you have not a *testimony*?" Such an exclamation from the mouth of a man otherwise reasonable and judicious, is a volume. It shows how the *party-soul* is narrowed down: and how all its perceptions are directed to those things which put Christians asunder, instead of those things which should bring them together; and which, for their importance, may not, without degradation, be *named* in company with the causes of their disunion. With one, the watch-word is "our excellent, our apostolical church"—with another, "the mode of baptism"—with a third, "the solemn league and covenant"—with a fourth, "the Burgess oath"—with a fifth, "psalmody." Upon these subjects, and such as these, their respective partisans collect their information and their strength—they whet each other till they become "as sharp as a needle." A stranger hearing them talk on their favourite topics, would be astonished at their understanding and answers. But lead them away from their peculiarities to those things which concern the kingdom of God—which are *common* to the household of faith—which require a *general* Christian mind—and how lamentable, for the most part, is the falling off! "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." And here is the explanation of that ordinary phenomenon, that the rise of party-sense is the fall of sacred knowledge. Sectarian fires put out Christian light.

Nor does the *practical judgment* suffer less. This is clearly seen in the estimate which animated sectarians form of character. The good qualities of their own adherent they readily perceive, admire, and extol. His failings they endure with patience; and his faults, which they dare not justify, they can overlook and extenuate. But should he quit *their* connexion, the first are disparaged, the second are no longer tolerable, and the third swell into crimes. On the other hand; Virtues and graces in a different party they are apt to admit with reluctance; and rarely without qualification. It shall go hard if some "dead fly" do not taint the "good ointment"—if some scrupulous "but," some "fear," some "wish," do not insinuate a *doubt* where there is no room for *denial;* and relieve them from the pain, by throwing a cloud over the lustre, of excellencies not their own. But lo! all is altered! The light which only dazzled, grows suddenly mild and cheering! Our breasts fill with the "milk of human kindness;" and we welcome to our hearts the very man whom a week before we eyed askaunt, and should have thought to be a "spot in our feast of charity!" Nay, we often are summarily convinced that a person of dubious character has been injured and persecuted. Our inquiries are conducted with the nicest delicacy. So gentle our temper! so charitable our constructions! so large our allowance for infirmity! so deep our sympathy! Whence the miracle? Has a seraph, with fire from the altar of God, touched these men of unclean lips, and taken away the stains which alarmed our purity? Oh no! they are precisely what they were. Wherefore, then, this change in eye-sight, in feelings, in behaviour? Simple inquirer, thou knowest nothing of party-magick! They have come, or are coming, or are expected to come, over to US.

With such a perversion of the judgment it is impossible that *zeal* should be well directed either in the choice of its objects, or in the mode of attaining them. The memory of an observer who only glances over the scenes which pass before him can furnish many examples of passions excited, principles sacrificed, and efforts wasted, for the sake of party-baubles; while interests of primary importance to the glory of earth and heaven are neglected or thrust aside. It is inconsistent with the nature of our faculties and affections to pursue great and little things with equal ardour. He who is occupied with the little, cannot rise to the great. He who rises to the great, cannot sink down to the little. A candidate for empire will not fight for toys. He who can fight for toys is unfit for empire. The man of "broad phylacteries" will give himself no trouble about the "robe of righteousness;" the self-applauding "tither of mint and anise and cummin," has not room in his soul for "judgment and mercy and faith." Therefore it happens, that in proportion as the spirit of sect gets into a church, the spirit of the gospel goes out. Anxiety about her peculiarities becomes a substitute for the power of personal religion. The noisy champion of her pre-eminence, the proud observer of her ritual, will be a singular exception to a general rule, if he do not contribute little to the prosperity, and less to the ornament, of the church of God. A sanctimonious child of tradition, who counts it a mortal sin to eat flesh on Friday, and dispenses with any precept of the decalogue that stands in the way of his gratification, is not an absolute rarity. The furious advocate, and the furious enemy, of a liturgy, are in danger of being alike estranged from the worship of God "in spirit and in truth." Nor is it a chimerical fear, that in the hot contentions about psalmody, which have distracted and disgraced some of the American churches, the praises of both parties may, at times, have died away without "entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." It is a terrifying truth that living godliness languishes and decays in some of the "most straitest sects of our religion," their own members being judges; and is succeded by hard-faced formality. So that the complaint uttered more than a century ago by the venerable *Owen*, is not inapplicable now. "Whilst men have contended about ordinances and institutions, forms and ways of religion, they have grown careless and regardless, as unto personal holy conversation, to their ruin. They have seemed *like keepers of a vineyard, but their own vineyard they have not kept.* How many have we seen withering away into a dry sapless frame, under an hot, contending, disputing spirit about ways and differences of worship? Whilst they have been intent on one part of profession, the other of more importance hath been neglected."*

This witness is true. And what is yet worse, with such confessions from time to time on their lips, they proceed in the very same course; and instead of awakening to a just sense of their sin and folly, they "love to have it so;" and hold as their enemies, and as the enemies of good order, all who endeavour to cease from their "janglings;" and who, laying greater stress upon the bond of their union in him, than upon the party-coloured thread of ecclesiastical faction, stretch out the hand of fellowship to them "who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "This is a lamentation; and shall be for a lamentation."

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* On Heb. ch. iv. 1. vol. 2. 194. fol.

II. Upon the *church at large* the system of sectarian fellowship operates with a most baneful power.

1. It is a practical rejection of her *unity*. How she can be *one*, and yet sundered into a thousand pieces—how her parts constitute a beautiful harmonious *whole*, while they are allowed to have no more visible conjunction than if they were destitute of all affinity, is a paradox beyond comprehension. To cut a man off, by excommunication, from the whole church, supposes her to be one: Then to refuse him, while he retains his standing, the benefits of communion with the whole, supposes her not to be one. Again, to admit him, professedly, into that communion, and preclude him from the use of it except in a little corner, is at once to admit and to deny *her* unity, and to play the robber with *his* privileges: mocking him with sonorous titles which mean nothing. And to make unity of *sect* necessary to communion in the *church*, is to take her fellowship off from the basis on which her master laid it, her *Catholick unity;* and to rest it upon a basis of our own making, directly the contrary to his, viz. her *schisms;* i. e. to found all her actual communion in the principle of her

disunion. In the mouths of men who behave thus,what intelligible sense can be annexed to the phrase, "*unity of the church?*"

2. Sectarian communion breaks up the *charity* which ought to subsist between all the members of the body of Christ—

In their mutual benevolence:

In their sense of a common interest:

In the support which each should receive from the other: and

In their co-operation to promote the kingdom of God.

1st. The restricted communion of sects is incompatible with their *mutual benevolence.*

It is not in the nature of things that men should avoid each others company; should strive pertinaciously for the mastery; should put upon each other marks of publick dishonour; and yet their "brotherly love continue." The most amicable controversies are dangerous. They seldom end as they begin. An argument between friends is prone to gender animosity: and if they separate with excited feelings, alienation and enmity too frequently follow. It is so with collective bodies. When they are once apart, they gradually recede further and further from each other. New points of discrepancy arise; create new subjects of contention; open new sources of crimination; gather new faggots for the flame of party-passions; present new obstacles to concord; and thus deface the fairest feature of Christianity—"love to the brethren." How sadly this has been verified needs no proof. "This," saith Dr. *Owen*, "is that whereon the Lord Christ hath laid the weight of the manifestation of his glory in the world: namely, the love that is among his disciples; which was foretold as the peculiar glory of his rule and kingdom. But there are only a few footsteps now left of it in the visible church; some marks only, that there it hath been, and dwelt of old. It is, as unto its lustre and splendour, retired to Heaven; abiding in its power and efficacious exercise only in some corners of the earth, and secret retirements. *Envy*, *Wrath*, *Selfishness*, *Love of the World*, with *Coldness* in all the concerns of religion, have possessed the place of it. And in vain shall men wrangle and contend about their differences in opinion, faith, and worship, pretending to design the advancement of religion by imposing their persuasions on others: Unless this holy love be again re-introduced among all them who profess the name of Christ, all the concerns of religion will more and more run into ruin."*

One would imagine that churches of the present day had been sitting for their picture to this great master of moral painting. Yet, with thankfulness to the God of peace, the likeness must be acknowledged to be less striking than it was some few years since; although too exact, even now, to be disputed as if it were not drawn from life with the pencil of truth.

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* On Heb. xiii. 1.

One very remarkable circumstance here deserves our notice. Kind affections between churches and their members have decreased in the midst of eulogies upon the grace of love; cogent arguments on its importance; and pathetick persuasives to its exercise. How has this happened? "The plain reason of it is, because the love which men so contend for, is confined to that practice in and of *ecclesiastical communion*, whose measures they have fixed to themselves. If you will do thus and thus; go in such or such ways; so or so far; leave off such ways of fellowship in the gospel as you have embraced, and think according unto the mind of God, *then you have love*, else you have none at all. How little either *unity* or *love* hath been promoted by such principles and practices, is now evident: yea, how much divisions, animosities, and mutual alienations of minds and affections have been increased by them."* Thus the fever of sectarian zeal has weakened the strength, and chilled the warmth of Catholick charity.

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* Owen on Heb. vi. 10, vol. iii. 106, fol.

2d. The same restricting zeal tends to expel from the churches a *sense of their common interest.* "*My* church"—"*your* church"—"*his* church," are so incorporated with our habits of thinking and acting, as to make us nearly forget they are all members of one and the same church of God. Hence we feel but little concern in each other's welfare. The inspired rule has hardly any more place in our feelings. "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." Their sufferings and their joys are their own: we sympathize with them in neither the one nor the other. Where is the instance of a church rejoicing that the "word of the Lord has free course and is glorified" in another? Do they not rather rejoice in each other's hurt? Do they not seize, with evident satisfaction and avidity, upon those blemishes which provide matter for censure, and give a plausible colour to comparisons? Are they not often eager to draw members away from sister churches? Do they not betray *complacency* in accessions which build themselves up at the expense of pulling the others down? Do they not view and represent their increase by such means, as a proof that religion is flourishing?

Their church has indeed gained: But what is gained by the *church of Christ?* Alas! this is a question which they who "bite and devour one another," are seldom at the trouble of asking. And it is because their king is "God, and not man," that they are not utterly "consumed one of another."

3d. When churches lose the sense of their common interest, they withhold from each other that *support* which it is their duty, and might otherwise be their inclination, to yield.

Each leaves the other to stand or fall by herself. The invasions of an adversary upon one, make little impression upon the rest. They all doze in security, provided an attack be not directly against their own possessions. They see errours spreading, mischiefs growing, which their timely interposition might contribute to arrest; and it would not be wanting were the case formally their own: but as matters are, "it is none of their business." They stand by and let the ruin work, till it be too late; and then console themselves with bearing their "testimony" against evils which they might have prevented. Have they forgotten that in spiritual as in temporal life,

tua res agitur, paries cum proximus ardet?

"your own house is in danger when your neighbour's wall is on fire?" or do they imagine that the HOLY ONE is to be put off with such negligent and selfish loyalty?

They also decline to bear one another's burdens: at least they do so to an extent which infringes upon every principle of their relation as parts of a great whole. The good things of this world, where there is no sort of lack, must be dealt out, if at all, with a hand unusually sparing to those who are not of "our church." I am far from insinuating that the opulent do justice to their means or their professions *within* the boundaries of their own sect. There is no duty in which, even thus narrowed, they are more generally, more sinfully, and more shamefully, deficient: and that they shall find, many of them to their eternal cost, when God shall make them feel that they were only *stewards*, not *proprietors*, of their substance; and shall arraign them at his bar as robbers of his treasury. But little as they might do in any case, they do still less than they would if the claims of Christ were always backed by the claims of sect. And thus an affluent Christian district permits a poorer one to pine and languish through the want of aid which it could most conveniently afford. If the history of early believers, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, may be credited, "from the beginning it was not so."

Their restricted communion, moreover, teaches different sects to *dishonour each other's Christian character.* Insomuch that the most ample recommendations from one will not procure admission to church-privileges in another; and the mere desire to go, upon whatever grounds, from one to another, shall deprive a person of every official document of his life and conversation; let it have been ever so exemplary and edifying. Not a certificate of ecclesiastical standing shall be given; though most respectfully asked: and a Christian on whom there has not lighted the breath of accusation, shall be turned adrift, like a religious vagabond, to sue for the courtesy of any church that may please to take him in. What is this, but to affront, in the face of the world, that particular church which he wishes to join, as though she were not of the "household of God;" and to treat him like an apostate simply for preferring to be under her immediate inspection?

To so great a length is this temper indulged, as sometimes to corrupt *moral discipline* in the church where it prevails, and to counteract it in others where it does not. Who can think, without shuddering, of a man's being called up as an *offender*, and being required, on the peril of *censure*, to confess his *sin*, and promise *amendment*, for—what, Christian reader, for what?—why—

"tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon"—for *hearing* "the words of eternal life" from the mouth of an unquestioned ambassador of our King, who has not his credentials countersigned by US—more briefly—from a minister who is not of *our* party!! That *hearing* "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" in one of his own churches, should be accounted a *crime* and a *scandal* in another! And that an attempt to remove from one to another, should subject his servants to the threat and the hazard of being thrown out of them all!—Did Paul ever expect it should come to this?

Even this is not the whole. To avoid censure for misconduct, it is not a strange thing for some people to be seized with sudden fits of conscience, and get most opportune illuminations of understanding—to steal away to another church, then deny the jurisdiction they have deserted; set up for peculiar humility, zeal, and sanctity; and have their claims *admitted*, and be themselves received, by the churches to which they flee! Nay, persons under *actual censure for immorality*, have not found it impracticable nor difficult to shelter themselves in churches which most loudly accuse others of lukewarmness and laxity. They who hold themselves to be too pure for communion with their brethren, should not try to destroy what little vigour of discipline may be left, nor open their church-bosom as an asylum for fugitives from the law of God's house.

4th. The spirit of sect hinders the churches which it governs from *co-operating* together in promoting the kingdom of God.

In the United States, where, generally speaking, there is no legal provision for the maintenance of religion; and especially among the new settlements, there is frequently, in very small districts, a confluence of people from various denominations. Their junction makes a flourishing town, and would make a flourishing church. They agree in primary, and disagree in secondary principles: But they will not, for the sake of the former, lay aside their contests about the latter. Collectively they are able to support the gospel in comfort and dignity—separately, they cannot support it at all. They will not compromise their smaller differences. Every one must have his own way; must be completely gratified in his predilections. The rest must come to *him;* he will neither go to *them,* nor meet them upon common ground: And the result is, that they all experience alike, "not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." Sanctuary they have none. They lose, by degrees, their anxiety for the institutions of

Christ. Their feeble substitutes, their small social meetings, without the "ministers of grace," soon die away. Their Sabbaths are Pagan: their children grow up in ignorance, in unbelief, and in vice. Their land, which smiles around them, like the garden of God, presents an unbroken scene of spiritual desolation. In the course of one or two generations, the knowledge of God is almost obliterated; the name of Jesus is a foreign sound; his salvation an occult science: and while plenty crowns their board, and health invigorates their bodies, the bread of life blesses not their table, and moral pestilence is sweeping their souls into death. All this from the idolatry of "our" church. They might have had Christ at the expense of sect. They preferred sect, and they are without Christ. How far the mischief shall proceed, God only can tell. It is enough to fill our hearts with grief, and to shake them with terrour, that from the combination of this with other causes, we have already a population of SOME MILLIONS of our own colour, flesh and blood, nearly as destitute of evangelical mercies as the savage who yells on the banks of the *Missouri.**

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* See, on this subject, an interesting tract by the Rev. Dr. LYMAN BEECHER, "*On the importance of assisting young men of parts and talents in obtaining an education for the gospel ministry.*" pp. 20.

The ingenious and inquisitive authour has calculated, from various data, that out of the *eight millions* of souls which compose the popu-

When sectarian jealousy and pride lead professing Christians thus to sacrifice themselves and their children, it would be vain to look for their concurrence in generous efforts for the good of others.

How much yet remains to be done before "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea;" how much before it fill the corners of every Christian country, it would be superfluous to show. "Darkness covers the earth; and thick darkness the people." Millions after millions go down to the grave unacquainted with the "grace which bringeth salvation;" uncheered by the hope which conquers death. If the world receive the knowledge of "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he

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lation of the United States, *five millions* are either utterly without the stated ordinances of the gospel, or are consigned to the most illiterate ministrations. Supposing his calculations to exceed the fact, as it is difficult to be accurate upon so great a scale; yet, with every reduction which fastidiousness itself can require, the result is sufficient to alarm, to appal, and almost to overwhelm, a Christian who compares the ratio of our increasing population, with the probable supply of the means of grace.

Several causes have no doubt concurred in producing our deplorable state; but that sectarian jealousies have not withheld their full amount of influence, seems not to admit of a question. The churches have been in a profound sleep, as to this momentous concern. The good God awaken them with his own voice; for every other is wasted on the wind.

hath sent," they must owe the blessing to those who already enjoy the "words of eternal life."—If the banner of the cross ever wave triumphantly over the last battlements of idolatry, it must be planted by hands which have been washed in the blood of the cross.—If the doctrines of kindness and peace shall humanize the habitations of cruelty, and subdue the sons of blood, they must flow from the lips of those who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." Here is a field large enough for their labours; an object worthy of their zeal. Here are conquests to be atchieved infinitely more splendid than any which signalize the heroes of the sword; and a "recompense of reward" as far above their brightest honours, as the "crown of glory which fadeth not away," is better than the breath of a "man that shall die, and the son of man that shall become as grass." The enterprise is stupendous; the thought is awful. Yet awful and stupendous as they are, the thought is to be embodied in fact, the enterprise to be a matter of history. So saith the word of our God. And that Christians, were they *hearty* in the cause; half as hearty as they are in getting the "mammon of unrighteousness," are able to accomplish that word, does not permit a doubt. But for its accomplishment there must be a union of counsels, of confidence, and of strength, unknown in the church since the days of apostolick harmony. To such an union nothing can be more hostile than the spirit of sect. We do hail indeed, with an exultation not unworthy, we hope, of bosoms which have been touched by celestial fire, the auspicious dawnings of such a day of love. The truly gracious efforts in which the land of our fathers, the island of Great Britain, has taken the lead; and keeps, and seems destined to keep, the pre-eminence; encourage us to anticipate things which many prophets and wise men have desired to see, and have not seen them. Eternal blessings on those children of the truth who have excited what may one day prove "a general movement of the church upon earth," in order to "speak peace to the heathen!"—Upon those benefactors of the nations, who have poured their offerings into the treasury of God, and have joined their hands with their opulence in the glorious work of sending the Bible, which teaches sinners what they "must do to be saved," to "all peoples, and kindreds, and nations, and tongues"—Upon those vigilant sons and daughters of charity, who have gone out into the "highways and hedges" of the country—into the "streets and lanes" of the city, "to seek," like their adorable Redeemer, "and to save that which was lost;" to bring the Sabbath, with its mercies, into the cabins of the poor, and the houses of the profane; andto train up, by labours worthy of the Lord's day, for "glory, honour, and immortality," those wretched outcasts who were candidates for infamy in this world, and for perdition in the next!

Whose heart does not swell with transport? Whose lips do not pour forth benedictions? Who that names the name of Christ can refuse his "God speed?" But what do these things involve, and how have they been accomplished? See it, O disciple of Jesus, and rejoice!—They involve, they have been accomplished by, *the prevalence of the* CHRISTIAN *over the* SECTARIAN! No such thing was attempted by modern believers; no such honours encircled their brow, till the "Sun of righteousness, arising upon them with healing in his wings," melted their ices, warmed their soil, and made their sectarian "wilderness to blossom as the rose."

Stronger proof of the baleful and blasting influence of sect on the "kingdom of God," no man can ask, than the fact, now notorious to the whole world, that what has been thus effected for the one, has been done at the expense of the other. If he wishes for confirmation, let him cast his eyes around. Let him see in the caution, the management, the address, which Christians of a

Catholick spirit are obliged to employ—in the slanders which, though refuted on the spot, and put to deeper and deeper shame by every moment of experience, still rear their front and maintain their hardihood—in the coldness, shyness, distance, of some Christian churches, who come not YET "to the help of the Lord against the mighty"—let him see in these things how strong a rampart sectarianism throws up around the camp of the Devil! Let him shiver with horrour when he hears, not from lying Fame but from unvarnishing Verity, that whole denominations are to be found—denominations sound in the faith of Jesus, who are utterly unable to impart the gospel to perishing Pagans and Paganized Christians; and who nevertheless, a few individuals excepted, will not lift a finger, will not contribute a farthing, toward enlightening their darkness; because, forsooth, the candle cannot be carried in *their candlestick!* What shall we, what *can* we say to such reluctance? Does it admit of more than one interpretation? viz. that they had rather these their poor fellow-sinners should sink down to hell under the brand of the curse, than rise up to heaven with the "image and superscription" of the Son of God, unless *their own* name be entwined with *his* in the coronet of life? They mean not so: they think not so: they shrink and tremble at the very idea. Then it is time for them to examine by another standard than has regulated too many of their proceedings, whether their *deeds* have not said so; and whether justice to their best principles and affections does not require them to change their course!

III. We have yet to survey this sectarian fellowship from another point of view—its effects on the *surrounding world.*

1st. The first effect is visible, and has already been noticed. Many, who might have rejoiced in the light of life, had Christian churches been more concerned for the kingdom of God than for the predominance of party, are left to darkness and ruin. Let not the eager partizan who might have put forth his helping hand to save them from the pit, but would not, imagine that his negligence will be unnoticed when God "maketh inquisition for blood." The eternal death of multitudes lies at the door of our unseemly strife.

2d. We hinder the success of the gospel where it is enjoyed even in purity.

With what face do we praise our religion as the religion of love, when we live, or behave as if we lived, in enmity? If the same jealousies, rivalships, antipathies, and other passions which reign among secular men, reign, or *appear to* reign, among us also, how shall we prove that we are better than they? What can we persuade them to think of the *church* but that she is their own *world* in disguise, and so much the worse for her claims to sanctity? If, without even the pretence of differing about essential truths, sect clash with sect as harshly and unkindly as any political factions whatever, how shall the one take precedence of the other in the scale of moral probity?

These inquiries are too natural not to rise in the mind of every reflecting man of the world. Have they no tendency to put him further and further from the faith of Jesus? to harden his heart against the gospel of immortality? to render its very terms designating moral character; such as "good conscience"—"spiritual-mindedness"—"self-denial"—"bearing the cross"—"following Christ," &c. suspicious, if not odious in his eyes? Whence proceed his sneers, his ridicule, his flings of "hypocrisy,"—"fanaticism,"—"priestcraft," and the other contemptuous phrases with which his vocabulary is so plentifully stocked? "From the enmity of his depraved heart," you will say—"because the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Doubtless. But is there no stimulus to his enmity in the scandalous spectacle of those who profess "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope of their calling," playing the Jew and the Samaritan toward each other?—without communion, without confidence, without religious "dealings" together—alienated, sundered, opposed, as if their title to heaven were founded in their mutual hostility? Do not these things cause him to err, and turn the Rock of salvation into "a stone of stumbling and rock of offence?" Do they not avert his eye from the beauty of Zion; stop his ears against the eulogy of her converts; and put into his mouth that bitter and biting taunt, "These Christians have just religion enough to hate one another heartily?"

Shall we wonder at his mistake? How should *he* recognise believers in the Lord Jesus, if they do not seem to recognise each other? For in very deed, sectarians are Christians in disguise. The sectarian stands foremost, the Christian behind. Sectarian distinctions are masks: sectarian champions, ecclesiastical knights covered with their armour, themselves unseen. The masks are of all hues and all features. They must be removed before you can perceive that the combatants are of one species. Sectarianism stripped off, you see the Christians. You discover the identity of race—the family features—those beautiful features in which they resemble their Father who is in heaven; and are "conformed to the image of the first-born among many brethren."

Blessed likeness! enchanting loveliness! Are the painted earth-made vizors which conceal "the human face divine," and substitute, in its room, their own deformed and forbidding visages, worth the price they cost us? worth the conflicts which have all the pains of military warfare without its recompense? and all the hardihood of chivalry without its generosity? worth the broken unity, the blighted peace, the tarnished beauty, the prostrate energy, the humbled honour, of the church of God? Ah no! Our hearts *feel* that they are not. What then remains but to lay aside our petty contests? to strike our hands in a covenant of love—a "holy league," offensive and defensive, for the common Christianity—to present our consolidated front to the legions of errour and death; and march on, under the command and conduct of the Captain of our salvation, till the nations mingle their shouts in that thundering *Alleluia*—"The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!"

FINIS.

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